

INSIDE TODAY

U.S. NEWS

SHERIFF SHOT



Fresno County Sheriff Margaret Mimms comforts a sheriff detective outside the emergency room at Community Hospital in Fresno, Calif. on Thursday morning, Feb. 25, 2010. Two Fresno County deputies and a police officer were shot by a man who then barricaded himself inside a house in Minkler, Calif. and kept firing on law enforcement officials, authorities said.

Read more on Page A5

SPORTS NEWS

HATING OHNO



This March 7, 2002, file photo shows a member of South Korea's Democratic Liberal Party staging an anti-U.S. protest opposing the U.S. decision to impose punitive tariffs on steel imports, in front of the U.S. Embassy in Seoul. The poster depicts American short-track speedskater gold medalist Apolo Anton Ohno and South Korean skater Kim Dong-sung.

Read more on Page A12

Price of a barrel of petroleum

US\$ 78.17

↓ 1.83

Obama ends live TV health summit, accord unlikely

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Barack Obama ended an extraordinary live-on-TV summit on health care overhaul Thursday with the bleak assessment that accord between Democrats and Republicans on his top domestic priority may not be possible. He rejected Republican preferences for starting from scratch, discussing the issue much longer or taking a step-by-step solution, and instead suggested that Democrats will try to pass a sweeping overhaul without Republican support. "We cannot have another yearlong debate about this," Obama said at the end of a 7½-hour marathon policy debate. Obama and other Democrats argued that a broad overhaul is imperative for the country's future economic vitality. *Continued on Page 4*



President Barack Obama listens during a meeting with Republican and Democratic Congressional leaders to discuss health care reform, Thursday, Feb. 25, 2010, in the Blair House across the street from the White House in Washington.

Associated Press

Snowstorm in Northeast, rain pounds New England

GEOFF MULVIHILL

Associated Press Writer

PHILADELPHIA — A slow-moving winter storm packing heavy, wet snow and potentially flooding rain spread over the Northeast on Thursday, disrupting air traffic and closing schools. Utility companies braced for possible widespread power outages overnight due to high winds and toppled trees.

The strongest wind and heaviest snow was forecast for late Thursday and early Friday, with a foot or more of snow and high winds expected from southeastern Pennsylvania, into New Jersey and New York and up to parts of New England. Parts of western Maine received nearly a foot a snow Thursday, while Philadelphia received a dusting.

Continued on Page 3

Afghan govt installed in Taliban stronghold

ALFRED de MONTESQUIOU
HEIDI VOGT

Associated Press Writers

MARJAH, Afghanistan (AP) — Afghan officials raised the national flag over Marjah on Thursday, asserting government control even as Marines searched for militant holdouts. Kabul also confirmed the arrest of another top Taliban leader — part of a roundup that could further strain the insurgent movement.

Continued on Page 8

Afghans listen to speeches after raising the Afghan national flag at an administrator department in Marjah, Helmand province south of Kabul, Afghanistan on Thursday, Feb. 25, 2010. The Afghan government took official control of the southern Taliban stronghold of Marjah on Thursday, installing an administrator and raising the national flag while U.S.-led troops worked to root out final pockets of militants.

Associated Press



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House sends extension of Patriot Act to Obama

LARRY MARGASAK

Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON (AP)

— Major provisions of the nation's primary counterterror law would be extended for a year under a bill passed Thursday by the House of Representatives after Democrats retreated from adding new privacy protections.

The House voted 315 to 97 to extend the USA Patriot Act, sending the bill to President Barack Obama. Without the bill, the provisions would have expired on Sunday.

The Senate approved the extension Wednesday. The privacy protections were cast aside when Senate Democrats lacked the necessary 60-vote supermajority to pass them. Thrown away were restrictions and greater scrutiny on the government's authority to spy on Americans and seize their records.



Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano speaks with Sen. Patrick Leahy D-Vt., on Capitol Hill in Washington, Wednesday, Feb. 24, 2010, prior to testifying before the at the Senate Homeland Security Appropriations subcommittee hearing on her department's fiscal 2011 budget.

Associated Press

The Democratic retreat is a political victory for Republicans and a major

disappointment for Democrats and their liberal allies who believe the Patriot Act fails

to protect privacy and gives the government too much authority to spy on Americans

AP source: Ethics panel finds Rangel broke rules

By LARRY MARGASAK,

Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON — Rep. Charles Rangel, the most powerful tax-writing lawmaker in Congress and a 34-year veteran of Capitol Hill, knowingly accepted Caribbean trips from a corporation in violation of House rules, the House Ethics Committee ruled Thursday, The Associated Press has learned.

At least four other members of the Congressional Black Caucus who were also on the 2007 and 2008 trips were exonerated by the panel, according to a congressional source familiar with the findings. The finding is certain to jeopardize Rangel's chairmanship of the House Ways and Means Committee. The tax-writing committee will take a lead as Congress determines the fate of former President George W. Bush's expiring tax cuts. Rangel's ethics troubles also present an election-year dilemma for House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, who led a Democratic takeover of the House in 2006 on a campaign promise to end a "culture of corruption" in the GOP-led Congress.

The 79-year-old Rangel, D-N.Y., has been in the House 30 years. It was unclear whether the findings would affect whether he seeks re-election.

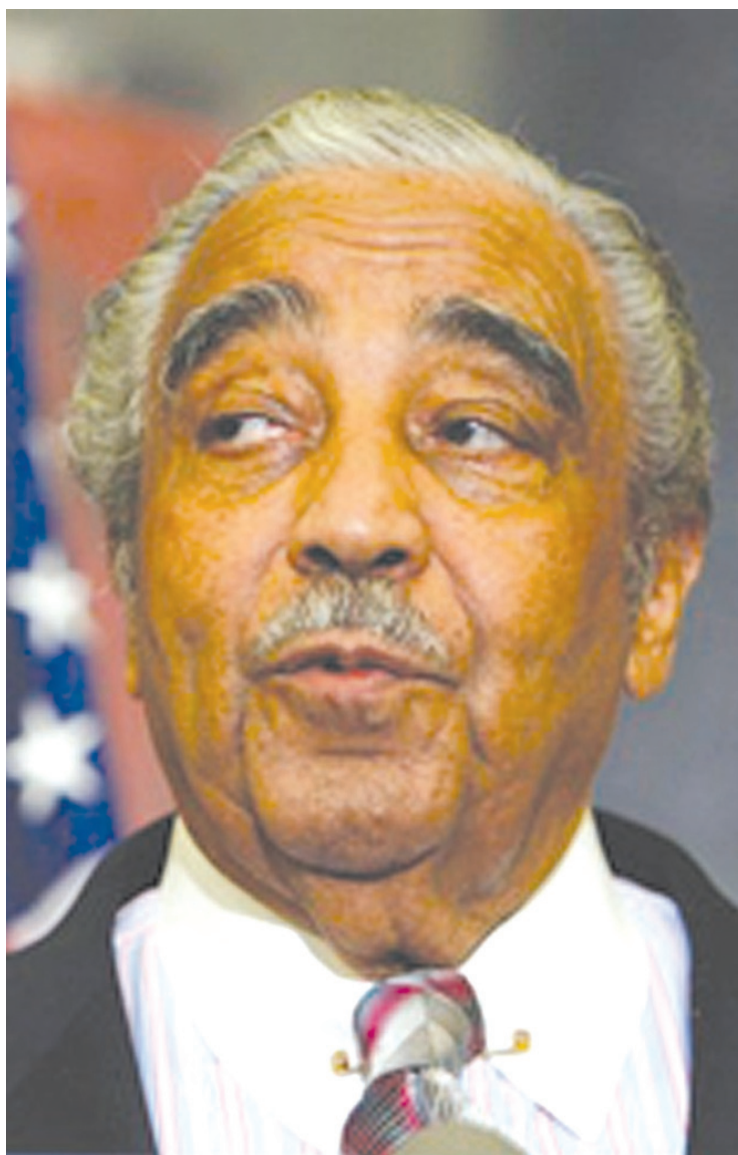
The committee found that the financing of the Caribbean trips was improper for all the lawmakers involved but that only Rangel was aware that a corporation that routinely lobbied Congress picked up the tab, said the congressional official who was not authorized to speak on the record.

The committee decided against issuing formal charges against Rangel that could lead to punishment such as a censure.

The ethics committee will issue its findings in a report scheduled to be made public Friday.

Additional ethics investigations of Rangel's finances and fundraising are still under way, but they are not connected to the ruling on the Caribbean travel.

Rangel had no immediate comment. □



In this July 17, 2009 file photo, House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Rep. Charles Rangel, D-N.Y. speaks during a news conference on Capitol Hill in Washington. The Associated Press has learned that the House ethics committee has concluded that Rangel knowingly accepted Caribbean trips in violation of House rules that forbid hidden financing by corporations.

Associated Press

and seize their property.

The three sections of the Patriot act that would stay in force:

—Authorize court-approved roving wiretaps that permit surveillance on multiple phones.

—Allow court-approved seizure of records and property in anti-terror operations.

—Permit surveillance against a so-called lone wolf, a non-U.S. citizen engaged in terror who may not be part of a recognized terrorist group.

Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Patrick Leahy, a Democrat, noted that the bill with privacy protections had been approved in committee by a bipartisan majority. He said the measure "should be an example of what Democrats and Republicans can accomplish when we work together, but I understand some Republican senators objected to passing the carefully crafted national security, oversight and judicial review provisions in this legislation."

Sen. Jeff Sessions, the ranking Republican on Leahy's committee, said Thursday that any changes to the Patriot Act would weaken it.

"Recent terror attacks, such as those at Fort Hood and on Christmas Day, demonstrate just how severe of a threat we are facing," Sessions said. "This extension keeps Patriot's security measures in place and demonstrates that there is a growing recognition that these crucial provisions must be preserved."

The Obama administration supported the revisions to the law as approved by the committee. Republicans have been steadily pounding the Obama administration over the closing of the detainee prison at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, as well as the possibility of holding civilian trials for detainees in the United States. They have also criticized federal agents for informing a Nigerian, Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, of his right under the U.S. Constitution to remain silent after 50 minutes of questioning for allegedly trying to ignite explosives on a Detroit-bound airliner on Dec. 25. □



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SNOWSTORM

Continued from Front Page

About 4 inches of snow fell in New York City, where a man was killed by a falling snow-laden tree branch in Central Park — one of at least three deaths being blamed on the storm.

In parts of southern and mid-coastal Maine more than 3 inches of rain had fallen and forecasters say some areas could get more than 7 inches. The Presumpscot River in Westbrook was expected to crest at 9 feet over flood stage by Friday afternoon. The river in the flood-prone New Hampshire town of Goffstown was nearing flood stage and residents were told to prepare for possible evacuation.

Hundreds of flights were canceled at major East Coast airports.

The latest blast of winter was expected to linger more than 24 hours, meaning more headaches Friday. More snow is predicted for much of the region Saturday, too. The National Weather Service put much of the East Coast under wind advisories and warnings until 7 a.m. Friday. The agency warned that winds could blow steadily between 20 and 30 mph in some areas, with gusts of 55 mph or higher in coastal and mountainous areas.

Even coastal New England, which was seeing rain but

nothing like the 18 inches of snow expected in some parts of northern New Jersey and upstate New York, was under coastal flood watches.

While forecasters can predict the snow totals and what that will mean — slippery roads, a snow day for the kids — it's trickier to know whether winds might create havoc.

"Your tree may fall down; your neighbor's may not," said Kristina Pydynowski, a meteorologist for AccuWeather, a private forecasting company in State College, Pa.

She said dense, wet snow weighing down trees would make it more likely for strong winds to knock them down. And power will probably be hardest to restore in areas where heavy snow keeps repair crews at bay.

In upstate New York, a storm that hit the area with up to 2 feet of snow Wednesday left some 150,000 homes and businesses without power. About 49,000 utility customers remained without power late Thursday, most in the Hudson Valley.

Nearly 2,000 utility customers in New Jersey were without electricity Thursday afternoon as state was hit by its fourth major storm of the winter.

The fifth of an inch of snow that fell in Pittsburgh by

early afternoon Thursday was enough to break the city's record for the snowiest month since record keeping began in 1884.

In snow-weary Philadelphia, this winter had set a seasonal record of more than 70 inches of snow even before the first flakes fell. The city and New Jersey had only recently finished cleaning up from the two blizzards that deposited more than 3 feet of snow a few weeks ago.

Airlines canceled hundreds of flights across the Northeast. Officials at Philadelphia International Airport said nearly one-fifth of the flights scheduled there for the day had been scratched. The prediction of strong winds was the main reason, said airport spokeswoman Victoria Lupica.

Thousands of schools across the region either closed or let out early. New York State Police attributed two traffic deaths to the weather.

In Allentown, Pa., 52-year-old Jim Yourgal put on knee-high snow boots and trudged three miles to his job as a valet at an orthopedic center. He figured he wouldn't be driving home in a foot of snow. His dedication was no big deal, he said.

"What else am I going to do, read a book at home? I can do that on the weekend," he said. □



A woman's umbrella is upset from a gust of wind during a winter snow storm in Philadelphia, Thursday, Feb. 25, 2010.

Associated Press



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Republican leaders, from left, Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell of Ky., House Minority Leader John Boehner of Ohio, Senate Minority Whip Jon Kyl of Ariz., and Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz. arrive at the Blair House, across the street from the White House in Washington, Thursday, Feb. 25, 2010, to participate in the health care summit with President Barack Obama.

Associated Press

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HEALTH SUMMIT

Continued from Front Page

The president cast health care as “one of the biggest drags on our economy,” tying it to an issue that’s even more pressing to many Americans.

Though there was much talk of agreement, each side held onto long-entrenched positions that left them far apart. Democrats seek a kind of broad remake; Republicans favor much more modest changes.

“We just can’t afford this. That’s the ultimate problem,” said Rep. Eric Cantor, the No. 2 House Republican.

Passing a version of the bill that Republicans have so far managed to block despite solid Democratic majorities in Congress is critical to the president’s political future and that of his party ahead of congressional elections



in November.

At stake is the Democrats’ stalemated legislation to extend coverage to more than 30 million people who are now uninsured.

Polls show Americans want their elected leaders to address the problems of high medical costs, eroding access to coverage and uneven quality. But the public is split over the Democrats’ sweeping legislation, with its \$1 trillion, 10-year price tag and many complex provisions, including some that wouldn’t take effect for another eight years — after Obama has packed up and left the White House.

But neither side gave ground throughout on Thursday, sticking mostly to familiar arguments and talking points. The president urged Republicans to “do a little soul searching” and said majority Democrats would decide quickly how to proceed on the issue that has eluded leaders for half a century.

Both chambers of Congress passed separate bills last year. But before the two versions could be reconciled, Republicans captured the Massachusetts Senate seat in a special election to replace the late Edward M. Kennedy. That cost Democrats the 60-vote supermajority needed to overcome Republican procedural obstacles and pass major legislation.

Public skepticism about the health care plan was seen as contributing to the Republican victory in Massachusetts, an overwhelmingly Democratic state.

Despite losing their supermajority, Democrats can still pass major health legislation by using special budget rules that require only a simple majority. They have been reluctant to use that process so far because it would enrage Republicans and likely further worsen the partisan

divide.

Obama lamented the partisan bickering that has stalled the legislation. “Politics I think ended up trumping practical common sense,” he said. But, he noted, “everybody here understands the desperation that people feel when they’re sick. And I think everybody here is profoundly sympathetic and wants to make sure that we have a system that works for all Americans.”

And yet, even as he pleaded for cooperation he acknowledged early on in the summit that agreement may not be possible. “I don’t know that those gaps can be bridged,” Obama said. “If not, at least we will have better clarified for the American people what the debate is all about.”

Disagreements were not always expressed diplomatically on Thursday.

The forum at one point yielded a testy exchange between the president and his former opponent Sen. John McCain, who complained that Obama reneged on a campaign promise to bring change to Washington for encouraging health care dealmaking behind close doors.

“We’re not campaigning any more. The election is over,” Obama snapped, prompting the Republican to retort that he’s “reminded of that every day.”

Many lawmakers and Obama also stressed areas of agreement, including items such as allowing parents to keep young adult children on their health plans into their 20s, and ensuring that sick people aren’t dropped by insurance companies. But such items occupy the edges of reform.

The summit was held at Blair House, the elegant presidential guest quarters across the street from the White House. Leaders of both parties spoke, with Obama steering the debate as moderator. □

Calif deputy dead, officer critical after shooting

By TRACIE CONE

Associated Press Writer

SANGER, Calif. — A gunman opened fire Thursday on authorities who tried to serve search warrants at his mobile home in Central California, killing a sheriff's detective and critically wounding a police officer before barricading himself in the residence during a raging gunbattle.

Deputies had no contact with the unidentified gunman after the shooting stopped and were unsure if he was still alive, Fresno County Sheriff

Margaret Mims said. It was unclear if anyone else was inside the home.

The names of the officers were not immediately released.

"We lost a good deputy sheriff today," Mims said.

Hundreds of shots were fired after deputies and a state fire official arrived at the mobile home to serve the warrants connected to arson and shooting cases allegedly involving the gunman.

Mary Novack, who runs a convenience store across the highway, said authorities used

a loudspeaker to repeatedly order someone inside to surrender then smashed down the door.

She saw deputies go inside before hearing gunfire.

"Oh my god, somebody's going to be dead," Novack recalled thinking at the time. She later saw an officer on the ground.

Jim Stone, 46, who lives about 100 feet from the mobile home, said he was evacuated after the shooting erupted.

The police officer from the city of Reedley was wounded while responding to a call for backup after the deputies had been shot, Mims said.

Another wounded Fresno County deputy was in stable condition.



A Fresno County Sheriff deputy with a bandaged head is wheeled into the emergency room at Community Hospital in Fresno, Calif. on Thursday morning, Feb. 25, 2010. Two Fresno County deputies and a police officer were shot by a man who then barricaded himself inside a house in Minkler, Calif. and kept firing on law enforcement officials, authorities said.

Associated Press

California lawmakers: Cut foul language, please



McKay Hatch, 16, of Pasadena, sits near the Assembly floor after a resolution was passed declaring the first week in March of each year as a voluntary "Cuss Free Week" on Thursday, Feb. 25, 2010. The teen started a No Cussing Club at his junior high school in 2007. Similar clubs have since cropped up in every state and 20 countries.

Associated Press

ROBIN HINDERY

Associated Press Writer

SACRAMENTO, California (AP) — Californians had better start watching their mouths.

The state Assembly passed a resolution Thursday that would establish the first week of March as "Cuss Free Week" throughout the state. If approved by the Senate next week, the measure would take effect immediately.

The resolution includes no enforcement mechanism and is simply meant to promote greater harmony

and connectedness, said Assemblyman Anthony Portantino, a Democrat from La Canada Flintridge and co-author of the measure.

"I've always wondered why we behave differently when grandma is watching than when we're on our own," said Portantino, who owned up to his share of four-letter words. Portantino said the California Legislature — known for imposing strict clean air and clean water laws — is the first state legislative body in America to consider a statewide profanity-free week.

The resolution was inspired by a South Pasadena teenager, McKay Hatch, who started a No Cussing Club at his junior high school in 2007. Similar clubs have since cropped up in every state and 20 countries.

Hatch, who traveled to Sacramento with his family to support the resolution, said he sees a link between foul-mouthed incivility and other forms of problem behavior, such as drug use and bullying.

Next up for the 16-year-old? Promoting no-cussing measures in other states and internationally.

"Next year I want to do a world tour," he said. "Cussing is a hard habit to break, but anyone can do it." □

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South Korean protesters participate in a rally opposing the U.S. and South Korean government's policy against North Korea in front of the foreign ministry in Seoul, South Korea, Thursday, Feb. 25, 2010. North Korea has threatened to take strong military action if South Korea and the U.S. go ahead with planned joint military drills.

Associated Press

By EDITH M. LEDERER

Associated Press Writer

UNITED NATIONS — South Africa sent a report to the United Nations saying it confiscated a shipment of North Korean tank parts hidden among sacks of rice which were headed for the Republic of Congo in violation of U.N. sanctions.

In the report, obtained Thursday

by The Associated Press, the South African government said the two containers are currently stored in a state-secured warehouse in Durban while its investigation continues. It estimated the value of the conventional arms at 6 million rand (about \$770,000)

The shipment's final destination, according to the

South Africa reports North Korea sanctions violation

bill of lading, was the port of Pointe Noire in the Republic of Congo, the small oil-rich country often overshadowed by its larger neighbor, Congo. The Republic of Congo, whose capital is Brazzaville, has reportedly experienced a wave of recent violence.

U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said in testimony Wednesday to a Senate committee that the South African seizure was another example of the effectiveness of U.N. sanctions, adding that hardly a week goes by without a report of a new seizure.

In one of the major seizures, Thai authorities, acting on a tip from the U.S., found 35 tons of weapons on an Ilyushin Il-76 cargo plane that stopped in Bangkok en route from the North Korean capital, Pyongyang on Dec. 12. Thailand and some

independent arms trafficking experts say flight documents indicated the plane's cargo — listed as oil drilling equipment — was headed for the Iranian capital, Tehran.

The U.N. Security Council imposed tough new sanctions on North Korea last June, banning the export of all weapons and authorizing ship searches on the high seas to try to rein in its nuclear program. The resolution was adopted after Pyongyang's second nuclear test on May 25, 2009, which violated a council resolution adopted after its first nuclear blast in 2006.

The report to the Security Council committee monitoring sanctions against North Korea is entitled "breach of the Security Council resolutions..."

It traced the shipment from the DGE Corporation via the "Machinery Expand Imp Corp

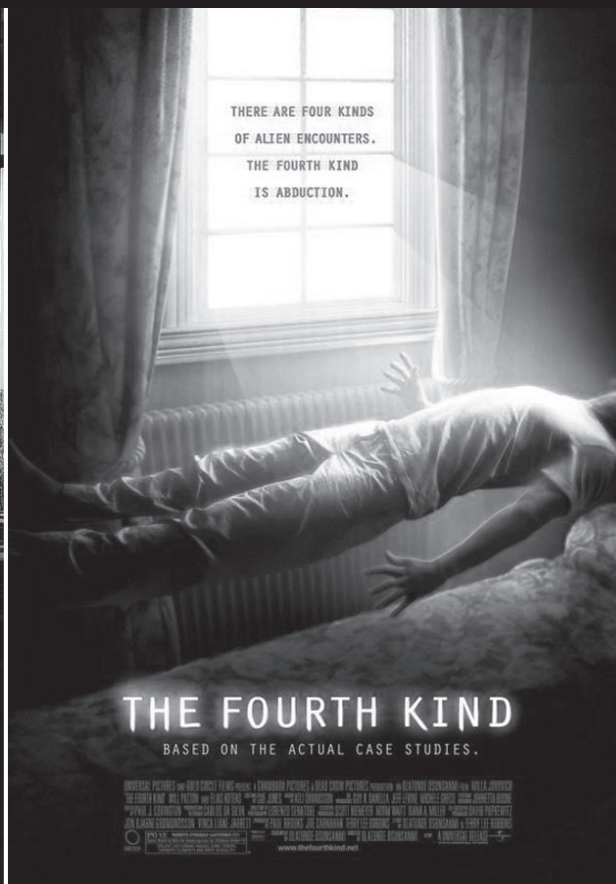
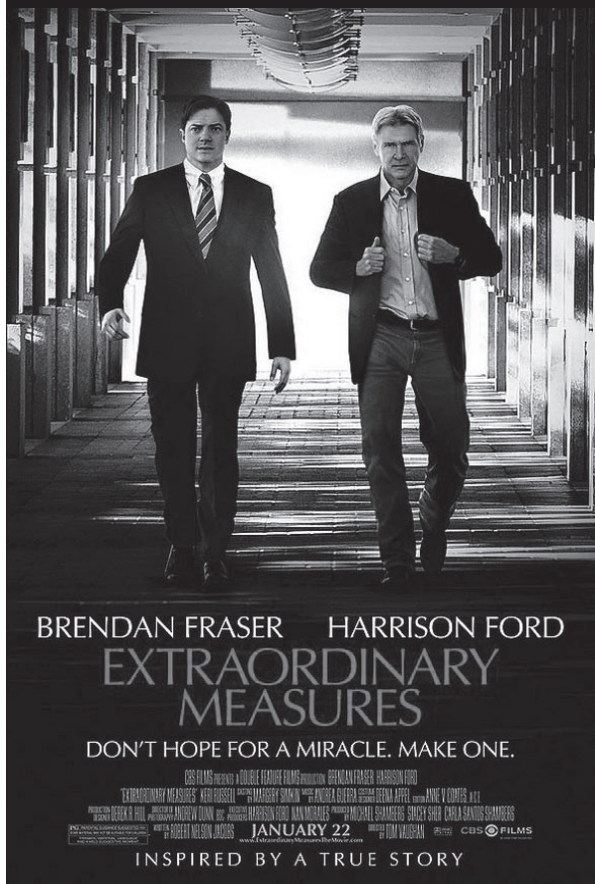
(cq)," both established to be in North Korea, to the Chinese port of Dalian where it was put on board the CGM Musca on Oct. 20. The bill of lading described the contents of the two containers as "spare parts of bulldozer," according to the report. At Port Klang, Malaysia, the shipment was transferred to another vessel, the Westerhever, which was chartered by Delmas Shipping, a subsidiary of the French shipping company, CMA-CGM, the report said. Delmas requested that CMA-CGM Shipping Agencies South Africa (Pty) Ltd. represent the Westerhever on its voyage to South Africa.

The captain was instructed to refuel in Durban on Nov. 28-29, but due to fuel shortages in Durban, the Westerhever was ordered to take on fuel in Walvis Bay, the report said. □



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daily:		6:00	8:30		
matinee:	1:00	3:15	late show:	11:00	
PG-13	THE LOVELY BONES				
daily:		5:30	8:30		
matinee:		2:30	late show:	11:30	
R	EDGE OF DARKNESS				
daily:		4:30	6:30	9:00	
matinee:	2:00		late show:	11:30	
PG	ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS "THE SQUEAKQUEL"				
daily:		4:30			
matinee:	12:30	2:30	late show:		
PG	VALENTINE'S DAY				
daily:		6:30	9:00		
matinee:	12:45	3:30	late show:	11:45	
R	THE WOLFMAN				
daily:		6:00	8:45		
matinee:	12:15	3:00	late show:	11:30	
R	LEGION				
daily:		7:00	9:30		
matinee:			late show:	12:00	

AT PASEO HERENCIA

PG	EXTRAORDINARY MEASURES				NEW
daily:		6:00	8:30		
matinee:	1:00	3:30	late show:	11:00	
PG-13	DEAR JOHN				
daily:		6:15	8:45		
matinee:	1:15	3:45	late show:	11:30	
PG	PERCY JACKSON & THE OLYMPIANS				
daily:		5:30	8:15		
matinee:	12:00	2:45	late show:	11:00	
R	THE BOOK OF ELI				
daily:		6:00	9:00		
matinee:	12:15	3:00	late show:	11:45	
R	FROM PARIS WITH LOVE				
daily:		4:00	6:15	8:30	
matinee:	1:45		late show:	11:00	
PG-13	AVATAR				
daily:		4:45	8:00		
matinee:	1:30		late show:	11:15	





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Syria, Iran affirm ties despite U.S. calls

ALBERT AJI

ELIZABETH A. KENNEDY,
Associated Press Writers

DAMASCUS, Syria (AP) — Syrian President Bashar Assad defied U.S. calls to loosen ties with Iran on Thursday, saying his long-standing alliance with Tehran remains strong despite overtures from Washington intended to shift his loyalties. The U.S. has reached out to Syria in recent months by nominating the first U.S. ambassador to Damascus since 2005 and sending top diplomats to meet with President Bashar Assad. Washington is hoping to draw Syria away from Iran and the militant groups Hezbollah and Hamas.

But with Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad by his side in Damascus, Assad said Thursday that America should not dictate relationships in the Middle East.

"I find it strange how they talk about Middle East stability and at the same time talk about dividing two countries," Assad told reporters when asked about Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton's call Wednesday for Syria to move away from Iran. Assad took a swipe at Clinton

for making such a suggestion, saying he and Ahmadinejad "misunderstood, maybe because of translation error or limited understanding." In a show of unity, the two signed an agreement canceling travel visas between the their countries.

U.S. State Department spokesman P.J. Crowley, speaking to reporters in Washington on Thursday, said Assad "need only look around the region and recognize that Syria is increasingly an outlier."

"We want to see Syria play a more constructive role in the region and one step would be to make clear what Iran needs to do differently. And unfortunately, there was no evidence of that today," he said.

President Barack Obama is determined to engage with Syria, a country seen as key to peace in the region but which the State Department considers a sponsor of terrorism.

Former President George W. Bush withdrew the last U.S. ambassador to Syria in 2005 after the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri, which his supporters blamed on Syria. Syria denies any links.

Assad's strong words Thursday indicate that America does not have the kind of leverage it thought over Syria, said Joshua Landis, an American professor and Syria expert who runs a popular blog called Syria Comment.

"America overplayed its hand," Landis said. "The rest of the world is engaged with Syria — France is doing business, Turkey is doing business. Syria can survive. But it can't survive cutting ties with Iran."

Still, there are signs Assad could be open to a breakthrough with America. Assad has begun to dismantle his father's socialist legacy since he rose to office in 2000. He has loosened the reins on banking, sought to attract foreign investment, and encouraged tourism and private education.

He also is hoping for U.S. help in boosting the Syrian economy and American mediation in direct peace talks with Israel — a recognition that he needs U.S. help to reach his goal of winning the return of the Golan Heights, seized by Israel in the 1967 Mideast war.

But Clinton said Wednesday that the recent decision to send an ambassador to Syria did not



Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, right, and Syrian President Bashar Assad review the honor guard at al-Shaab presidential palace, in Damascus, Syria, on Thursday Feb. 25, 2010. Syria's state-run news agency says Iran's president has arrived in Damascus for talks amid rising tensions between Israel and its Arab neighbors and U.S. efforts to break up Syria's alliance with Tehran.

Associated Press

mean American concerns about the country have been addressed. Speaking to lawmakers in Washington, Clinton said the nomination of career diplomat Robert Ford signaled a "slight opening" with Syria. But she said Washington remained troubled by suspected Syrian support for militant groups in Iraq and elsewhere, interference in Lebanon and Syria's close relationship with Iran.

Ahmadinejad's trip comes amid rising U.S. tension with Iran over its nuclear program. The U.S. and others believe Iran is hiding nuclear weapons development under the guise of a civilian energy program. Iran insist its intentions are

peaceful.

Assad called America's stance toward Iran "a new situation of colonialism in the region." Despite its efforts to woo Syria, Washington has not lifted sanctions on Damascus. First imposed by Bush and renewed by Obama in May, the sanctions cite Syria's support for terrorism, its pursuit of weapons of mass destruction and other activities including efforts to undermine U.S. operations in Iraq. Iran's economic and political support has enabled Syria to survive those sanctions and international isolation. Ahmadinejad stressed that Syria and Iran are partners with a long history. □

TALIBAN STRONGHOLD*Continued from Front Page*

About 700 men in turbans and traditional caps gathered in a central market for the flag-raising ceremony, during which Abdul Zahir Aryan was installed as the top Afghan official in this town of 80,000 in Helmand province. The provincial governor told the crowd that authorities were eager to listen to requests from the townspeople and provide them with basic services that they didn't have under the Taliban.

Taliban fighters still control about 25 percent of the 80-square-mile (200-square-kilometer) area in and around the town nearly two weeks after U.S. and Afghan forces launched their attack to seize Marjah, a major Taliban logistics and supply center and the largest community in the south under insurgent

control.

Marines and Afghan soldiers slogged through bomb-laden fields of northern Marjah on Thursday in search of an estimated 100 Taliban and foreign fighter holdouts — the last significant pocket of insurgents left in the town. Progress was slowed by difficult terrain with no roads, few tracks and many hidden mines.

Several residents told Marines that the Taliban were falling back and trying to delay the allied advance with hidden bombs.

"I'd expect they can't keep this up for long," said Capt. Joshua Winfrey, a company commander in the 3rd Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment.

He predicted the insurgents will soon hold their ground and fight.

Despite the insurgent holdouts,



A U.S. soldier stands guard in Marjah, Helmand province south of Kabul, Afghanistan on Thursday, Feb. 25, 2010. The Afghan government took official control of the southern Taliban stronghold of Marjah on Thursday, installing an administrator and raising the national flag while U.S.-led troops worked to root out final pockets of militants.

enough of the town has been secured for NATO and Afghan authorities to begin the most

difficult part of the mission — restoring local government and rushing in public services to win the confidence of the population to dry up support for a Taliban return.

Aryan, the chief administrator, cannot work out of the main government building because the Taliban rigged it with bombs and booby traps.

"When an area has been liberated and cleared, then we provide governance immediately, we provide development assistance, we provide the local community with a better livelihood," NATO Secretary-General Anders Fogh Rasmussen said at an alliance meeting in Spain. "The current operation in Helmand province will serve as a role model for further operations."

The loss of Marjah comes as the Taliban is reeling from the arrests of key figures, including their No. 2, Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, who was picked up this month in Pakistan.

Two Pakistani intelligence officers told The Associated Press that nearly 15 senior and midlevel Taliban figures have been detained in Pakistan in recent weeks.

They spoke on condition of anonymity because they weren't supposed to release the information.

An Afghan government spokesman, Siamak Herawi, said Thursday that Pakistani officials had told Afghan

authorities that the top Taliban commander for eastern Afghanistan, Mullah Abdul Kabir, was among those taken into custody. Kabir's arrest last week had been rumored for days, but Herawi's comment was the first on the record by an official of either country. NATO troops have taken over Marjah before, only to withdraw and leave the town under the control of corrupt and ineffectual administrators who alienated the townspeople and enabled the Taliban to come back.

International officials are keenly aware of the challenges, including the possibility that old-style regional powerbrokers could interfere, using their political clout to install inept cronies in the local administration and divert funds earmarked for the town.

"There is the influence they will seek to have over appointments, and we have to accept the political realities. These guys have some influence," said Mark Sedwill, NATO's senior civilian representative in Afghanistan. Aryan is an outsider from the town of Musa Qala in northern Helmand who has spent much of the past decade in Germany. Western diplomats say they hope this will be an asset because he doesn't have ties to warlords. But it could also mean he doesn't have the local allies needed to stand up to regional power brokers. □

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India, Pakistan hold 1st talks since Mumbai attack

TIM SULLIVAN,

Associated Press Writer

NEW DELHI (AP) — India and Pakistan held their first official talks since the 2008 Mumbai siege, with both sides saying they wanted to rebuild trust shattered in that attack but acknowledging that the meeting was just a first step toward a renewed peace process.

The four-hour meeting between the nuclear-armed rivals ranged from shared water resources to the status of the disputed Himalayan region of Kashmir. But terrorism was the focus of the discussions — an emphasis Pakistan quickly made clear would only slow further talks.

“The only way forward is to engage meaningfully across the board, and not hold the relationship hostage” to the issue of terrorism, Pakistani Foreign Secretary Salman Bashir told reporters after the meetings. India has long argued that Pakistan has

not done enough to rein in militants operating from its soil, an accusation that Pakistan denies.

Expectations were extremely low for Thursday’s talks, which were seen as little more than a symbolic first meeting and which India had billed as “talks about talks.” Both sides indicated little of substance had been achieved.

But just meeting after 15 months was a significant diplomatic achievement — even if it came in the wake of months of pressure from Washington, which is eager to see Pakistan shift resources away from the Indian border and toward supporting the U.S. in its fight against the Taliban and al-Qaida.

“Our aims were modest” Indian Foreign Secretary Nirupama Rao said after the discussions. “We have set out to take a first step towards rebuilding trust, and I believe my meeting with the Pakistan foreign secretary has constituted that first step.”

There was no immediate talk of a second meeting, with Rao saying only that she and Bashir “have agreed to remain in touch.”

U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton expressed hope there was more to come.

“The United States has encouraged a dialogue, and we certainly hope it will happen,” Clinton told a congressional hearing.

Pakistan has called for the resumption of comprehensive peace talks, but India has demanded it crack down on militants first, especially Hafiz Saeed, whom India accuses of orchestrating the Mumbai siege.

Rao said she reiterated to Bashir that his nation must do more to dismantle terror networks and gave him dossiers on those linked to the Mumbai attacks, an al-Qaida-linked militant who has issued threats against India, and Indian fugitives hiding in Pakistan.



Pakistan’s Foreign Secretary Salman Bashir speaks to media as his Indian counterpart Nirupama Rao, left, looks on before the start of a delegation level meeting, in New Delhi, Thursday, Feb. 25, 2010. India and Pakistan held high-level peace talks Thursday for the first time since the 2008 Mumbai attacks in an effort to rebuild confidence and reduce tensions between the nuclear-armed rivals.

Associated Press

Pakistan is trying seven men on charges they planned and carried out the Mumbai attacks, which left 166 people dead, but the militant network blamed for the assault continues to operate relatively freely in the Pakistani city of

Lahore.

Bashir insisted, though, that Pakistan had done all it could.

“As far as the issue of Mumbai is concerned, Pakistan has done everything that was proper and could be done,” he said. □



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Whitney Houston: Tour great, despite bad reports



FILE - In this Feb. 11, 2010 file photo, singer Whitney Houston performs at Saitama Arena in Saitama, near Tokyo, Japan.

(AP Photo/Shizuo Kambayashi, file)

By **NEKESA MUMBI MOODY,**

AP Music Writer

NEW YORK — Though video postings of her recent

performances in Australia have been less than flattering, Whitney Houston says her tour is going great — and she's in great health.

Houston's publicist, Kristen Foster, released a statement Thursday, saying: "Whitney is in great health and having a terrific time on her tour and with her fans. She said more than 9,000 people attended Houston's show in Brisbane and more than 12,000 were at Acer Arena in Sydney.

"Her fans were dancing and singing along with her and Whitney appreciates their support," Foster said.

That view contrasts with news reports quoting disgruntled fans who complaining about the star's voice and performance. Video snippets of Houston struggling to hit

notes in concerts in Sydney and Brisbane have circulated widely on YouTube and other outlets.

The 46-year-old, who is one of pop's all-time best-selling artists, staged a comeback last year with her first album in seven years, "I Look to You." It debuted at the top of the album charts.

During her hiatus from music, she battled drug addiction and ended a tumultuous marriage to singer Bobby Brown. But as she returned last year, she declared herself healthy and free from substance abuse.

This is Houston's first tour in years. It started in February in South Korea and will take her to Europe until at least May. Foster said there currently are no plans for a United States tour. □

'Idol' judges jeer male semifinalists

By **DERRIK J. LANG,**

AP Entertainment Writer

LOS ANGELES — Tim Urban tripped up his second shot at "American Idol" fame.

The shaggy-haired 20-year-old singer, who served as a last-minute replacement for 25-year-old shoe salesman Chris Goleglightly in the top 24 semifinalists, was derided by the Fox singing contest's judges for his screechy rendition of OneRepublic's "Apologize" during Wednesday's episode featuring performances from the top 12 male semifinalists. "We absolutely made the right decision the first time around by not putting you through based on that performance," proclaimed Simon Cowell.

Urban, a college student from Duncanville, Texas, wasn't alone. The panel didn't praise the retro style of 20-year-old college student Tyler Grady from Nazareth, Pa., on The Guess Who's "American Woman." They also weren't down with the acoustic take on Fall Out Boy's "Sugar We're Going Down" from 24-year-old father Andrew Garcia of Moreno Valley, Calif.

"It was too serious, too indulgent and not original enough," said a particularly



In this publicity image released by Fox, the 12 male finalists for the ninth season of the reality singing competition, 'American Idol,' front row from left, Andrew Garcia, John Park, Tyler Grady, Joe Munoz and Jermaine Sellers and, back row, from left, Lee Dewyze, Aaron Kelly, Tim Urban, Michael Lynche, Todrick Hall, Casey James and Alex Lambert, are shown.

(AP Photo/Fox, Patrick Ecclestein)

ruthless Cowell.

Other chastised crooners included 24-year-old theater actor Todrick Hall from Arlington, Texas, and 21-year-old college student John Park from Evanston, Ill. The judging panel was put off by Park's performance of Billie Holiday's "God Bless The Child" and admonished Hall for his transformative take on "Idol" winner Kelly Clarkson's "Since U Been Gone."

"You never want to take a song

and completely obliterate it," warned Randy Jackson.

The criticism also extended to chirpy 19-year-old high school student Alex Lambert from North Richland Hills, Texas. Cowell deemed Lambert's rendition of James Morrison's "Wonderful World" as the "most uncomfortable performance of the night." The insults weren't limited to tunes. Ellen DeGeneres playfully teased Lambert for keeping his "mullet" hairdo □



Actors Charlie Sheen (L), Jon Cryer (C) and Angus T. Jones celebrate backstage after winning the award for Favorite TV Comedy for "Two and a Half Men" at the 35th annual People's Choice awards in Los Angeles January 7, 2009.

REUTERS/Phil McCarten

Sheen rehab could prove costly as show shuts down

By **Matthew Belloni**

and **Eriq Gardner**

LOS ANGELES (Hollywood Reporter) — The future of CBS' "Two and a Half Men" has become Topic A in Hollywood since production on the series was put on hold Tuesday after star Charlie Sheen checked himself into rehab.

Attention is focusing on Sheen-related contracts for the show. Two important deal provisions -- the "morals clause" in Sheen's contract with producer Warner Bros. TV and the "key man" language in the show's insurance policy -- might be driving forces behind what happens next.

As TV's top-rated comedy, "Men" is a cash cow, so CBS and WBTV have an incentive to keep the show going as long as possible. But Sheen, who also faces charges stemming from a Christmas Day arrest for assault in Aspen, Colo., might not return as quickly as the net and production company would like. Which raises the question: Who's responsible for any financial hit from Sheen's absence?

WBTV and CBS declined to comment on Sheen's deal. But legal specialists offered their informed speculation. Here are some predictions for how this might play out.

First the morals clause:

Sheen likely has some kind of morals clause in his contract. Standard language allows employers to alter or terminate an employee's deal for bad behavior that harms the production. It would take a prolonged absence for TV's No. 1 star to get fired, but morals clauses often include liquidated damages provisions, meaning a star can be responsible for losses incurred due to his unruliness. Sheen reportedly earns more than \$900,000 per episode, making him the highest-paid actor on TV. If he violated his morals clause, the show's producers might go after him to recoup some of the money it loses when he's away.

"If the conduct is considered a material breach" of his deal, says Aaron Moss, a litigator at Greenberg Glusker, "then the network may be able to file a lawsuit for breach of contract."

Sheen checked himself into rehab in 1990 and eight years later was hospitalized after "consuming excessive amounts of drugs and alcohol." But notably, when he went to rehab Tuesday, his press statement did not specifically mention alcohol or drugs. This could be a signal of what's in his morals clause, meaning his reps might be trying to avoid any possible trigger.

Now the "key man" language:

Film and TV productions routinely buy insurance to protect against the unexpected. As part of that coverage, a "key man" provision would spell out what happens if someone instrumental to the production -- like, say, the star -- is not available due to some unforeseen event. □

BUSINESS

Aruba TODAY



A Chevrolet Volt extended-range electric vehicle sits at an event in Michigan in 2009. GMAC, the troubled former finance arm of General Motors, has been “stabilized” since the latest government bailout, a special US adviser told a congressional panel Thursday.

(AFP/Getty Images/File/Bill Pugliano)

GMAC stable after latest bailout: US aide

WASHINGTON (AFP) – GMAC, the troubled former finance arm of General Motors, has been “stabilized” since the latest government bailout, a special US adviser told a congressional panel Thursday.

Ron Bloom, a senior adviser to the US Treasury for the restructuring of the auto sector, told the Congressional Oversight Panel that GMAC, which has been converted to a bank holding company, is not yet ready for a stock offering. “We do believe that GMAC has been stabilized,” he said, while adding that the firm “has challenges ahead.”

Bloom said an initial public offering may be “at least a year out” because “capital markets are not fully healed.”

“Sometimes in the future there will be an IPO” that will allow the government to divest some of its stake, he added at a hearing by the panel supervising the 700-billion-dollar Troubled Asset Relief Program (TARP).

In December, the government pumped in another 3.8 billion dollars into GMAC and took a controlling stake in a bid to turn around the mortgage and auto lender.

The Treasury said the move would raise its equity stake in GMAC to 56 percent from 35 percent.

The ailing former finance arm of General Motors became a bank holding company a year ago to access federal aid amid the global financial meltdown.

The government had injected a total of 12.5 billion dollars in capital into GMAC in two installments.

The bailout funds are part of TARP used to stabilize the US financial system as well as the auto industry.

GMAC was the only one of 10 bank holding companies deemed to have fallen short in efforts to raise enough capital to weather adverse economic circumstances, the Federal Reserve said.

GMAC was the longtime financial arm of the largest US automaker until 2006, when GM sold a majority stake.

In December 2008, GMAC won permission to become a bank holding company to improve its access to Fed lending amid the global financial crisis. □

Stocks tumble on renewed concerns about economy

By TIM PARADIS
and STEPHEN BERNARD,
AP Business Writers

NEW YORK – Stocks slid Thursday as downbeat news about the nation’s job market and debt loads in Europe revived fears that an economic recovery will stall.

Major indexes at times lost more than 1 percent. The Dow Jones industrial average fell about 100 points. Treasury prices jumped as investors sought safe havens.

An unexpected rise in first-time claims for unemployment insurance raised concerns that the labor market will worsen. Meanwhile, the possibility of downgrades of Greece’s debt is fanning worries that financial troubles there will spread to other countries. The euro again fell, touching a nine-month low against the dollar.

The Labor Department said first-time claims for unemployment insurance rose by 22,000 to a seasonally adjusted 496,000. Economists polled by Thomson Reuters had forecast a drop in claims. It was the second straight week that claims rose unexpectedly. High unemployment remains one of the biggest obstacles to a sustained economic recovery. The Labor Department’s monthly report on employment will be released next week.

Trading in the U.S. has been choppy in recent weeks because of uneasiness about the economy. Global markets retreated earlier this month because traders were worried about Greece’s debt problems. The market’s drop early in the week, a rebound and the latest slide signal that investors are waiting for clearer information on the direction of the economy.



Specialist Ronald York works at his post on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange Thursday, Feb. 25, 2010.

(AP Photo/Richard Drew)

Justin Golden, a strategist at Macro Risk Advisors in New York, said there is an undercurrent of worry about long-term issues like debt in Greece. The presence of the concerns means it doesn’t take much to rattle investors.

“It’s a statement of how fragile the markets really are,” Golden said.

In midafternoon trading, the Dow fell 96.96, or 0.9 percent, to 10,277.20. It had been down 188 points in early trading.

The broader Standard & Poor’s 500 index dropped 7.94, or 0.7 percent, to 1,097.30, while the Nasdaq composite index fell 14.05, or 0.6 percent, to 2,221.85.

Bond prices rose, pushing yields lower. The yield on the benchmark 10-year Treasury note fell to 3.65 percent from 3.70 percent late Wednesday. Crude oil fell \$2.03 to \$77.97 per barrel on the New York Mercantile Exchange. Gold also fell.

The Chicago Board Options Exchange’s Volatility Index, which is known as the market’s fear gauge, rose 3 percent in afternoon trading. A rise in the VIX signals that investors are expecting swings in the market. Concerns about Greece grew after credit

rating agencies Standard & Poor’s and Moody’s said they might further downgrade the country’s debt. That would make it harder for the country to borrow.

The European Commission said economic sentiment in the 16 countries that use the euro worsened unexpectedly in February.

In other economic news, the Commerce Department had mixed news about manufacturing. Durable goods orders rose 3 percent in January because of a jump in commercial aircraft orders.

It was the biggest increase in six months for orders of goods that are expected to last at least three years.

However, orders fell by 0.6 excluding volatile transportation orders. Economists expected those orders to rise 1 percent.

Meanwhile, Coca-Cola Co. said it will buy the North American operations of its largest bottler, Coca-Cola Enterprises, and will give up its own bottling operations in Sweden and Norway.

Shares of Coca-Cola Enterprises jumped \$6, or 31.3 percent, to \$25.18, while Coca-Cola Co. shares fell \$2.17, or 3.9 percent, to \$52.99. □

SPORTS

Aruba TODAY

It's Ohno vs. S. Koreans in short track finale

BETH HARRIS

AP Sports Writer

VANCOUVER, British Columbia (AP) — South Korea is out to avenge its losses on the final night of Olympic short track speedskating, but they'll have to contend with the chaos of 20 skaters flying around the rink in the 5,000-meter relay.

They'll also have to watch for Apolo Anton Ohno of the United States, who is going for two more medals — one in the relay, another an individual in Friday's 500 meters, a 4½-lap mad dash that often rewards the fastest skater off the starting line.

"If you get fourth off the line, and you're not a really small guy and there's not lot of room, chances are you might get stuck there the whole race," Ohno said. "That's why



This Feb. 13, 2010, file photo shows USA's Apolo Anton Ohno, right, leading the pack, closely followed by South Korea Jung-Su Lee, left, during the men's 1500m finals short track skating competition, at the Vancouver 2010 Olympics in Vancouver, British Columbia. The American short-track speedskater, who goes up against the South Koreans again when he races for a historic seventh Winter Olympics medal on Saturday, may well be the athlete South Koreans hate the most.

Associated Press

a lot of these guys have these explosive starts.

They just blast off like a rocket."

Ohno will also anchor the U.S. team of J.R. Celski, Simon Cho and Travis Jayner in taking on the powerful South Koreans, China, Canada and France in 45 laps of confusion, or as it's officially known, the 5,000 relay final.

"Just watch the last four laps," Ohno said. "That's all that really matters."

Ohno will have to survive quarterfinal and semifinal rounds to have a chance of defending his Olympic title in the 500 final. His South Korean rivals — Sung Si-bak, with whom he tangled in the 1,500; Lee Ho-suk; and Kwak Yoon-gy — are all in other heats, so the earliest he could face them is the semis.

"He is the most experienced skater out there," Cho said about Ohno. "I wouldn't count him out. He's explosive, he's strong, he's seasoned, Apolo has got it all."

Cho wasn't so lucky. His quarterfinal heat includes Charles Hamelin of Canada, ranked No. 1 in the world; and world-record holder Sung.

"It should be a very fun race," Cho said. "Those are the top two skaters who should contend for the gold medal."

The 500 calls for a mix of speed and composure.

"It requires a little bit of patience for every single second of the lap," Ohno said.

"That fuse has to be shorter and shorter the more and more you advance for the rounds. There's very, very little space for passing."

Continued on Page 14



Serbia's Novak Djokovic reacts after he won his match against Croatia's Ivan Ljubicic during the quarterfinals of the Emirates Dubai ATP Tennis Championships in Dubai, United Arab Emirates Thursday, Feb. 25, 2010.

Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Marin Cilic failed to reach at least the semifinals for the first time this year when he lost to Jurgen Melzer of Austria 7-6 (8), 7-5 in the Dubai Championships quarterfinals on Thursday.

Defending champion Novak Djokovic was close to leaving with Cilic when he was down a set and 4-4 against former finalist Ivan Ljubicic. But Djokovic won the next eight games to prevail 2-6, 6-4, 6-0 and will face unseeded

Cilic loses to Melzer in Dubai quarters

Marcos Baghdatis, who beat Michael Berrer of Germany 7-6 (5), 6-1.

Cilic won titles in Chennai and Zagreb — including a win over Melzer in the semis — and made it to his first Grand Slam semifinals at Melbourne. He looked set for another win when he had two break points for 5-1.

But on a windy afternoon, Melzer held serve and Cilic started making mistakes and bowed out after more than two hours. "Of course, it's a little bit disappointing. I think that I could go a little bit further," sixth-seeded Cilic said. "I had my chance to make something and to win a few more matches. But also, the other guy played well. Melzer deserved it."

Melzer was through to his second semis of the year.

"Well, to be honest, I think I was a little lucky to hold serve at 4-1," he said. "He played really fantastic when he started. I was playing too

short, with no spin and no height in my shots. But after that I mixed it up a little bit, played a little serve and volley, served better, and I took the chance to get back into the game, and I think that then it was a real match."

Melzer will next face seventh-seeded Mikhail Youzhny, who beat Janko Tipsarevic of Serbia 6-3, 6-4.

Tipsarevic, a day after ousting Andy Murray, was never in contention against Youzhny, and couldn't break the Russian in three chances.

"I knew he would be a little tired after last night's tough match against Murray, so I just wanted to make him run a bit," Youzhny said. "The plan seems to have worked."

He was a Dubai finalist in 2007, losing to Roger Federer.

Djokovic had known Ljubicic since the Croatian took him under his wing for his first year on tour. Ljubicic won their first match four years

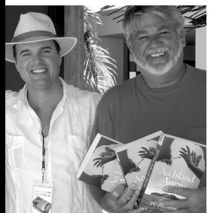
ago, but Djokovic had won their last four and knew how to beat Ljubicic — from the baseline.

But Ljubicic served too well with 14 aces and didn't give second-seeded Djokovic a chance until near the end of the second set.

"After losing the first set comfortably, I tried to hold my serve," Djokovic said. "I knew that at a certain point he's going to miss (a) couple of first serves, and that was my chance and that was it, you know. The 10th game (of the second set) kind of decided the match. Then I started hitting the ball and feeling really comfortable. But I was lucky, you know. Just lucky today."

Baghdatis hasn't topped Djokovic in three previous meetings. But the Cypriot already has a title this year, having won in Sydney.

He whacked 11 aces past Berrer and gave the German no break chances. □



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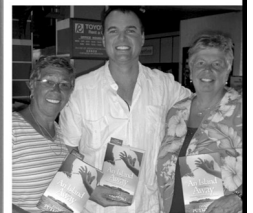
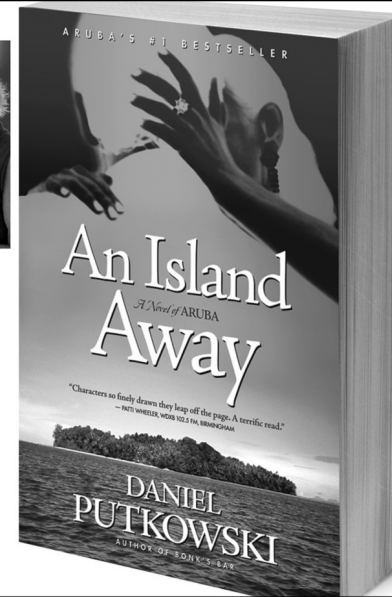
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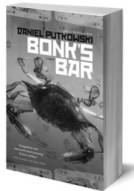
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Villegas shoots 9-under 62 to take Phoenix lead

By BOB BAUM

AP Sports Writer

SCOTTSDALE, Ariz. — The memory of a missed 3-foot putt did nothing to diminish Camilo Villegas's game Thursday in the Phoenix Open.

The 28-year-old Colombian tied the tournament first-round record with a 9-under 62 to take a one-shot lead over former Florida teammate Matt Every.

Villegas regrouped with a bogey-free round Thursday after making the semifinals of the Match Play Championship last weekend, but missing the short putt that would have put him in the final. He beat Sergio Garcia in the third-place match.

Justin Rose, Mark Wilson, Ryuji Imada, Rickie Fowler and Pat Perez were three strokes back at 65 in near-perfect conditions at TPC Scottsdale.

Phil Mickelson and defending champion Kenny Perry were in a large group at 68. Match Play champion Ian Poulter struggled to a 72.

Playing the back nine first, Villegas wrapped up his round by chipping in from 21 feet on the par-4 ninth for his ninth birdie.

A two-time winner on the PGA Tour in 2008, he credits a more relaxed approach to the game to his strong start to this season.

"I was getting a little too

concerned with my world ranking position and money list and this and that," Villegas said, "and I just got a little tight on the golf course. So I needed to put all those things aside and remember that I'm playing golf for a living, and there's a million people out there that would love to be in my shoes, and have fun with it."

In keeping with that attitude, Villegas shrugged off the missed short putt in last week's semifinal match against Paul Casey.

"You know what? It's OK," he said. "I've got no problem with it. I wish I would have made it, yes. But you know what? It ain't going to change me as a person."

Villegas' 9-under round tied the first-round tournament record shared by Steve Jones (1997) and Harrison Frazier (2003).

Every, who earned his tour card by winning last year's Nationwide Tour Championship event, also had no bogeys on a wide-open desert layout that was relatively quiet and calm with an estimated crowd of 69,475. That should change when even more rowdy fans stream in to what has become essentially a big party with a golf tournament running through it.

As many as 150,000 are expected Saturday, although rain could dampen the



Camilo Villegas, of Colombia, hits from the second tee during the first round of the Phoenix Open PGA golf tournament Thursday, Feb. 25, 2010 in Scottsdale, Ariz.

Associated Press

turnout.

Every ran off a string of six consecutive birdies starting on No. 17, the longest streak of its kind so far in the young PGA season.

He is coming off an unfortunate week at the Mayakoba Golf Classic in Cancun, where he signed an incorrect scorecard that had been kept by his lifelong golf hero and fellow ex-Gator Mark Calcavecchia in the third round and was disqualified.

Every said he was so upset with his play that he stormed away and signed his scorecard without even looking at it.

"It's 100 percent my fault,

and he felt horrible, but it's in no way his fault," Every said. "He's still my favorite player and he was a blast to play with."

Every, who earned his tour card by winning the Nationwide Tour Championship last year to finish 10th on the developmental tour's money list, said he hasn't dwelt on last weekend's mistake, noting that he would have been near the bottom of the leaderboard going into the final round.

"I haven't even thought about it the whole week really until somebody said something to me right after the round," Every said.

"Just because I got DQ'd doesn't mean I'm going to stop hitting it well."

Every played two seasons with Villegas at Florida.

"It's pretty neat," he said of the first-round results. "Obviously we played a lot of golf together. Not in the last few years, but he's a really, really good player. ... It's good to see him playing well, especially after last week. I mean, he missed that little putt and he rebounded well, so that says a lot about his attitude." □



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**OHNO VS S.KOREA***Continued from Page 12*

South Korea has the most medals with five going into the finale, although China has a leading three golds. Surprisingly, South Korea has been more successful in long-track speedskating, winning five medals, including three gold.

The South Koreans could have had more medals in short track, but their women's 3,000 relay team was disqualified for impeding after finishing first.

In the men's 1,500, Sung and Lee Ho-suk, second and third at the time, wiped out in a crash on the final turn, leaving their teammate Lee Jung-su with the gold and clearing the way for Ohno and Celski to claim the other medals.

South Korea is a strong contender in the women's 1,000, with Park Seung-hi and Cho Ha-ri competing in the quarterfinals Friday. They were on the 3,000 relay that was disqualified Wednesday, when China was awarded the gold.

South Korea's Kim Min-jung was leading when her left skate blade clicked with the right blade of China's Sun Linlin, causing the disqualification.

"I want a rematch," said Kim, who won't be skating Friday. "We all went and watched the race again, and I still couldn't accept the result. I don't think I made any mistakes. I failed to give Korea five relay gold medals in a row. I'm sorry for that." Chinese teammates Zhou Yang and Wang Meng, who already have two golds each, are in the 1,000 along with Sun. Those three were part of the winning 3,000 relay. □



Gold medallist Lee Jung-Su of South Korea, center, silver medallist Lee Ho-Suk of South Korea, left, and bronze medallist Apolo Anton Ohno of the USA, right, pose on the podium during the flower ceremony for the men's 1000m short track skating competition at the Vancouver 2010 Olympics in Vancouver, British Columbia, Saturday, Feb. 20, 2010.

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NBA Roundup

Mavericks too strong for Lakers

DALLAS (AP) — The Dallas Mavericks overcame the absence of Caron Butler to beat the the Los Angeles Lakers 101-96 on Wednesday in a clash of NBA divisional leaders, extending their NBA winning run to five games. Butler, a key part of a seven-player trade with Washington this month, missed the game because of a bad reaction to medication. Without Butler, Dirk Nowitzki and Jason Terry picked up the slack by scoring 22 of the Mavericks' final 23 points. Nowitzki finished with 31 and Terry with 30.

Los Angeles' Kobe Bryant scored 20 points and moved into 13th place on the career scoring list. Bryant, who passed Reggie Miller, has

25,298 points.

Bryant missed a 3-pointer that could have tied it with 25 seconds left.

In Houston, Dwight Howard was 11 for 11 from the field and had 30 points and 16 rebounds to help Orlando beat Houston.

Howard scored all of his points in the last three quarters, as he sat out almost the entire first period after committing two quick fouls. He had his 19th straight double-double to break a tie with Shaquille O'Neal for the franchise record.

Aaron Brooks led Houston with 24 points.

In San Antonio, Manu Ginobili scored 26 points and made a spectacular block on Kevin Durant's would-be dunk late

in the fourth quarter, leading San Antonio over Oklahoma City.

Ginobili's crucial block in the final minutes helped stop Durant's streak of scoring 25 points or more at 29 games. Durant had 21 points and 12 rebounds.

Tim Duncan had 19 points and 15 rebounds for the Spurs.

In Toronto, Andre Miller had 18 points, 10 assists and seven rebounds to lead Portland over Toronto. Brandon Roy added 20 points for the TrailBlazers. Hedo Turkoglu scored 24 points for the Raptors who failed to top 100 points for the first time in 21 games — a streak that had extended back to Jan. 6.

In Salt Lake City, Carlos



Oklahoma City Thunder guard Kevin Durant (35) looks to pass from a double-team of San Antonio Spurs' Manu Ginobili, left, of Argentina, and Richard Jefferson during the second half of an NBA basketball game at the AT&T Center in San Antonio, Wednesday, Feb. 24, 2010. Durant's streak of 29 games with at least 25 points came to an end as the Spurs defeated the Thunder 95-87.

Associated Press

Boozer scored 20 of his 33 points in the second half to help Utah defeat Charlotte. Deron Williams added 20 points and 12 assists for the Jazz, which has won 14 of its past 16 games to move within half a game of Northwest Division-leading Denver. Gerald Wallace scored 27 points for Charlotte.

In Milwaukee, Andrew Bogut had 26 points and 13 rebounds to continue his string of dominant performances for Milwaukee, sinking New Orleans.

The Australian had his fourth straight double-double in Milwaukee's fourth straight win.

The Bucks are tied for seventh in the Eastern Conference and back at .500 for the first time since Dec. 12. It's the first time Milwaukee has been .500 or

better after the All-Star break since 2005-06, when they last made the playoffs.

Marcus Thornton had 25 points for New Orleans.

In Phoenix, Steve Nash had 20 points and 13 assists in his return to Phoenix's lineup after missing a game to rest back and abdomen injuries, boosting the Suns to victory over Philadelphia.

In other games it was, Atlanta 98, Minnesota 92; Memphis 99, Washington 94; Portland 101, Toronto 87; Chicago 120, Indiana 110; Milwaukee 115, New Orleans 95; Orlando 110, Houston 92; San Antonio 95, Oklahoma City 87; Utah 102, Charlotte 93; Phoenix 106, Philadelphia 95; Dallas 101, L.A. Lakers 96; and L.A. Clippers 97, Detroit 91. □

Wizards waive Ilgauskas, LeBron wants him back

WASHINGTON — Zydrunas Ilgauskas was waived Thursday by the Washington Wizards, and his old teammates want him to return to Cleveland.

"He knows I would love for him to be back here. I want him to be back here, especially while we're contending for a title," LeBron James said before the Cavaliers' game in Boston. "He's one of the main reasons why I want to win a title for this team."

The 7-foot-3 Ilgauskas, who was acquired from Cleveland on Feb. 17 as part of the three-team trade that sent Antawn Jamison to the Cavaliers, didn't play for Washington. He reported on Feb. 19, took a physical and immediately returned to Cleveland.

The 34-year-old is averaging 7.5 points and 5.3 rebounds this season.

"We agreed to terms with Zydrunas on a contract buyout, giving us further financial flexibility and allowing our young big men to continue to develop over the remainder of the



In this Jan. 8, 2010, photo, Cleveland Cavaliers center Zydrunas Ilgauskas, of Lithuania, heads to the bench during the Cavaliers' NBA basketball game against the Denver Nuggets in Denver. An official within the league tells The Associated Press the NBA has not threatened to stop a potential reunion between the Cavaliers and Ilgauskas. The Cavaliers traded their longtime center to Washington last week in the three-team deal that brought Antawn Jamison to Cleveland. The Wizards may decide to buy out Ilgauskas, allowing him to become a free agent.

Associated Press

season," Wizards president Ernie Grunfeld said.

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Rebensburg wins surprise GS gold, pants advance

JOHN PYE

AP Sports Writer

VANCOUVER, British Columbia (AP) — Norwegian Marit Bjoergen became the first triple gold medalist of the Vancouver Olympics on Thursday, while Whistler's problematic weather threw up yet another surprise when German outsider Viktoria Rebensburg won the giant slalom.

And Norway's magic pants continued their march towards Curling gold.

Unbeaten Canada advanced to the gold medal match against Norway in men's curling with a 6-3 win over Sweden. The Norwegians, wearing the colorful diamond-print pants that have become the fashion statement of the Vancouver Games and made them a Facebook hit, beat Switzerland 7-5 in the other semifinal.

In a gold medal grudge match in women's hockey Canada beat the United States 2-0. Karoliina Rantamaki scored 2:33 into overtime as Finland edged Sweden 3-2 in the bronze-medal match.

On the slopes at Whistler, Rebensburg, who had never won a major race, had a two-run combined time of 2 minutes, 27.11 seconds in a competition contested over two days because of dense fog. Her win gave Germany its eighth gold medal of the Vancouver Olympics and a joint lead in the medal standings with Canada and the United States.

The United States regained a share of top spot when Billy Demong and

Three-peat



Canadian players celebrate after they beat the USA 2-0 to win the women's gold medal ice hockey game at the Vancouver 2010 Olympics in Vancouver, British Columbia, Thursday, Feb. 25, 2010.

Associated Press

Johnny Spillane finished with gold and silver in a Nordic combined large hill competition that was marred by bad weather.

Demong picked up the United States' first ever gold in the Nordic sports by winning the 10-kilometer cross-country leg in 25 minutes, 32.9 seconds. Spillane won his third silver of the Vancouver Games, finishing four seconds behind.

Bjoergen anchored the women's 4x5-kilometer cross-country relay to victory over Germany and Finland. Bjoergen, who won the women's individual cross-country sprint and the 15-K pursuit, crossed in 55 minutes, 19.5 seconds.

Her three gold and a bronze from Vancouver, together with a silver medal from each of the 2002 and 2006 Olympics, make Bjoergen

the most successful Norwegian female athlete ever at the Winter Games.

"It has been so great, I would never have dreamed of one gold medal and now I have three, so this has been a wonderful Games," she said. "It was a big day for me and the last lap was awesome. I'm flying."

Snow and wind at Whistler that caused problems at the Alpine venue also forced race officials to restart the jump portion of the Nordic combined competition at the nearby Whistler Olympic Park.

The conditions were causing shorter jumps that were putting some of the better competitors at an insurmountable disadvantage because starting times for the cross-country section relate to each competitor's score in the jumps.

In the women's slalom, Rebensburg started her run before conditions deteriorated too much, and held off Slovenia's Tina Maze by 0.04 seconds. It was a second silver here for Maze, who was second in the super-G. First-run leader Elisabeth Goergl of Austria added another bronze, 0.14 back, repeating her downhill result.

The 20-year-old Rebensburg was sixth after the first run of the giant slalom, which was also marred by dense fog on Wednesday, eventually forcing organizers to reschedule the second run to the second day.

"Unbelievable! Unbelievable! Unbelievable! It just sounds so strange," said Rebensburg, who had to quickly improvise a post-race celebration. "I think I have to. Who wins a Gold

medal?"

First-run leaders, including Goergl, were slowed by dense fog in their second runs.

Super-combined gold medalist Maria Riesch, one of the Germans who'd been more favored to win a medal but finished 10th, advised her teammate to make the most of her unexpected triumph.

"She should experience this moment, right now in this moment because it all goes by like a film and tonight she will shake her head and wonder what happened," Riesch said.

Weather problems have plagued the Alpine program, which was delayed to start with and has had to be consistently rescheduled.

American Julia Mancuso, the defending champion in the giant slalom, had too much ground to make up after her disappointment Wednesday, when the start of her first run was interrupted because her teammate Lindsey Vonn was receiving medical treatment on the course.

A silver medalist in both the downhill and the super-combined, Mancuso had the third-fastest time in the second run and finished eighth.

The Canadians will play defending Olympic champion Sweden in the women's curling final after ousting world champion China in the semifinals.

Figure skating finishes in the evening with the women's gold medal expected to go to either South Korea's Kim Yu-na and Japan's Mao Asada. □

Also Time For Island Fun During Beach Olympic Games At Marriott

Philips Lighting Enjoys Aruba During Quality Improvement Competition



PALM BEACH – For the past 3 days a group of 70 employees of Philips Lighting North America (Canada, Mexico and the United States) enjoyed the island while staying at the

Aruba Marriott for the Philips Lighting Quality Improvement Competition. Each group of participants presented their innovative solutions to a Philips jury all day yesterday.



Congratulations to Team Phoenix, who launched the winning idea out of all improvements presented, earning a trip to Dublin!

There are 3 more Philips Lighting groups arriving at the Aruba Marriott on February 27th, March 2nd and March 5th, participating in the same events. All groups will have the opportunity to explore all the good things Aruba has to offer by means of some culinary events including a welcome reception and farewell dinner hosted by the Aruba Marriott Resort.

Continued on Next Page



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Philips Lighting Enjoys Aruba During Quality Improvement Competition



Continued from Page B1

Daytime activities include a Scavenger Hunt and Beach Olympic games provided by De Palm Tours and the energetic fun support team spearheaded by Jochem Ros and Sjoerd de Vries.

Shown here is an overview of the Beach Olympics held on February 25th at Palm Beach with the North America participants, divided over 6 colored groups. Team 'red' won first place; team 'orange' won second.

Safe travels home to all Philips team members leaving Aruba today! Aruba Marriott Resort & Stellaris Casino boasts 411 guestrooms – the most spacious on the island – each with large, private balconies overlooking the sparkling waters of the Caribbean Sea. On property, seven restaurants and cafes provide fare from light to elegant, while the largest casino in Aruba, a 6,500 square-foot spa, free-form swimming pool with cascading waterfalls and high-energy health club offer entertaining diversions. Luxury hotel-within-a-hotel Tradewinds Club is the newest addition to this beachfront resort. Marriott and Renaissance Caribbean & Mexico Resorts is comprised of ten resorts in seven of the top tropical destinations in the Caribbean and Mexico – Aruba, Cancun, Curaçao, Grand Cayman, Puerto Vallarta, St. Kitts and St. Thomas. □



Lecture by Anton Isaak at De Suikertuin



ORANJESTAD - On Wednesday, March 3rd Anton Isaak is giving a lecture at De Suikertuin restaurant in the Wilhelminastraat on the interesting topic of stress management and the differences between men and women in this area. The lecture is going to be

a follow-up to his previous session, which was titled 'It doesn't matter what you eat anyway'. Those who were present that evening will surely remember it as most entertaining and above all very interesting. Anton showed how digestion works and how we can influence our health by



taking a time-out while eating, stop drinking while eating and making sure we chew our foods carefully. At the end of this evening the topic of stress management in our daily lives was briefly addressed. The workshop on March 3rd is going to touch upon the fact why it is so hard to keep our

good intentions and manage stress in our daily lives and take better care of ourselves in the process. Anton will elaborate in an easy-to-understand and sometimes humorous way

on how men and women differ when it comes to stress management in daily life. The evening with Anton Isaak promises to be an interesting and joyful get-together. □

Occidental Grand Casino winners circle

PALM BEACH - On Wednesday, Mr. Willy Staupé from the USA, while playing at the hot slot machines in our casino hit jackpot for total amount of \$11,285.00. The Occidental Grand Casino is the place to try your luck at Craps, Poker, Black Jack and Roulette tables or get your adrenaline going with Hot Slots and Bingo.

Entertainment reigns as you enjoy a Las Vegas style show in the ballroom or follow it up with a night of dancing at Sound. For dazzling shows, dancing and gaming, visit The Casino at the Occidental Grand Aruba luxury all-inclusive resort. Hot Slots, Gaming Tables, Nightly Dinner & Shows, Top Entertainment, Poker Tournaments, Thursday's Free Slot Tournament, Friday's Raffles.

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AAA Drugs and Alcohol Awareness Sessions



ORANJESTAD – During the week AAA employees participated in various Drugs and Alcohol Awareness Sessions that were organized especially for them.

The facilitators for these sessions were Mr. Celaire from SAMBA who gave a presentation based on his experiences at SAMBA, Ms. Lisa de Lannoy who showed very shocking DVD clips where the current situations regarding

drugs and alcohol abuse were the main focus of attention and which information is also available on the website www.drugfreeworld.org and also Mr. Anton Isaak from Medwork who gave an extensive presentation on the drugs and alcohol testing procedure at AAA and also information from his own practice experience. □

The Crystal & Seaport Casinos Celebrate Long Term Commitments




ORANJESTAD – A festive gathering at the Renaissance Convention Center marked the anniversaries of casino employees, celebrating career milestones during the last quarter of 2009 while working for the popular and elegant Crystal Casino and the informal and fun Seaport Casino.

Manager Edgard Roos who celebrated his own 20th anniversary with the casinos this past December had the distinct honor to share the occasion with other members of management praising his team's long term commitment to hospitality and loyalty to the Renaissance properties in the heart of town.

Among those celebrating the 5 year career mark Elizabeth Monsanto, Seaport Beverage; Victor de Cuba, Crystal Slot & Change; Astrid Helder, Seaport Operation and Nayla Illis, Seaport Cage. Among those celebrating the 10 year career mark Roland Jacobs, Crystal Slot & Change; Seferino Carolina, Crystal Operation and Evelyn Hoek-Peternella, Crystal Operation. Among those celebrating the 15 year career mark Mirtha Willems, Crystal Cage; Alicia Tham, Seaport Operation and Chudetha Felipe, Crystal Operation.

Pictured here Roos with his dedicated team at the Renaissance Convention Center party. □



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Papiamento still alive

Berbice Dutch officially extinct

Berbice Dutch, a Dutch creole spoken in part of Guyana, has been declared officially extinct, according to an article in the March issue of the Dutch edition of National Geographic.

Berbice Dutch was spoken in plantations along the River Berbice, part of Guyana which was once a private colony founded by a Dutch planter from Zeeland. It is a mixture of the Zeeland dialect of Dutch, the local Arawak Indian language and Ijo, spoken by slaves from Nigeria.

Twenty years ago there were still handfuls of Berbice speakers in Guyana but, since it has been discovered that the last speaker died in 2005, the authoritative international language database Ethnologue has declared Berbice Dutch extinct.

A wide variety of Dutch creoles once existed around the globe. They included Albany Dutch, Jersey Dutch and Mohawk Dutch in North America, Berbice and Skepi in South America, Cape Dutch in South Africa, Ceylon Dutch in Sri Lanka and Javindo in Indonesia.

Those still alive and kicking include Papiamento in the Netherlands Antilles and Sranan Tongo in Surinam. Afrikaans, which is based largely on Dutch, is not officially classed as a creole although it does have features in common with many creoles



Second Chamber urged to handle constitutional laws

WILLEMSTAD--Antillean Prime Minister Emily de Jongh-Elhage has sent a letter to Chairman Willibrord van Beek of the Antillean Affairs Committee in the Second Chamber of the Dutch Parliament, urging that the pending legislation to make possible the dismantling of the Netherlands Antilles and new constitutional relations in the Kingdom be handled, despite the fall of the Balkenende Cabinet.

The prime minister understands that, with the now-caretaker Dutch Government, some important decisions cannot be taken at this time. However, she believes a delay in the legislation trajectory to new constitutional relations could have unforeseen and far-reaching consequences, and that the process can and should be completed as planned.

She points out that the process of constitutional reform within the Dutch Kingdom is at an advanced stage and that irreversible steps have been taken, expectations created among the population, and commitments made by politicians. The final goal is in sight, the transfer of Central Government tasks to the Island Territories has started, and the dismantling of the Netherlands Antilles was listed as a priority in the "Philipsburg Accord" for a new Antillean Cabinet to take office on March 26.

"This dismantling, and at the same time the build-up of the new constitutional entities, will suffer great damage if the legislation trajectory comes to a standstill. After all, all the necessary legislation is ready, with the handling of the laws for the so-called BES Islands (Bonaire, St. Eustatius and Saba-Ed.) scheduled for early March, while the vital Kingdom Consensus Laws would be dealt with early April," writes De Jongh-Elhage.

She points out that if the intended planning cannot be followed,



this will have huge, unforeseeable consequences for the future of the islands. "It will undermine the necessary stability and public confidence in good and proper governance in a serious way." "For the people of the islands, and personnel in the service of government in particular, there will be extraordinarily difficult times of uncertainty, and the consequences for the economies of the islands will be disastrous: investors will take a wait-and-see attitude or pull back.

"Therefore, the Government of the Netherlands Antilles believes it is in the best interest of the people of the islands to consider the legislation trajectory as 'matters in process,' and finalise this trajectory according to the agreements made," the letter concludes.

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HUMAN HINTS

Mirrors In Your Hologram - Practical Applications

Yesterday, we discussed the theory that all people that we know are actually mirrors of ourselves. Other people show us various aspects of ourselves and often they are aspects that we don't like or that we deny about ourselves.

When we realize that others are mirrors of ourselves, we hold a powerful tool for self exploration and growth.

When there is someone in your life who you don't like, who really gets under your skin, here is what to do. Think of what it is you don't like about their behavior, then try to recognize that behavior in yourself. There must be some situation that brings out that behavior in you, even if you don't realize it. When you recognize it in

yourself, you will be able to change it. As soon as you no longer share common traits such as similar bad behavior, you detach and disengage from the person you don't like. When two people are not similar, they cannot share the same hologram, they cannot be in each other's lives. We can remove people from our lives by not engaging them energetically, and not acting like them.

Since everyone we know are reflections of who we are, we can learn about ourselves and improve ourselves by watching others.

We can see both the good and bad in ourselves by observing other people. When we see good behavior we can follow it, and when we see people acting badly, we can see what not to do.

We often can not see our own bad behavior, but when we see it in others we can begin to recognize it in ourselves. When we change in ourselves what we don't like in others, they will disappear from our lives.

Since we're all mirrors of

each other, when we hurt others, we hurt ourselves far more. Imagine how we'd all act toward each other, if we each knew that everyone else was simply a reflection of ourselves. The easier we are on other people, the easier we are on ourselves. When you have patience with someone else, you have patience with yourself. When you like and accept others, you like and accept yourself.

Throughout the course of your day, try to remember that the people you interact with are each a different aspect of yourself. Try to see yourself in other people. Your compassion, patience and personal power will grow as you become more comfortable with this idea. You will gain an ever-deepening understanding of yourself, accompanied by the confidence that comes with truly knowing who you are.

When we understand why other people act the way they do, we can understand our own behavior, and then we can change.

Until Tomorrow...

Go to www.HumanHints.com to sign up to receive this column in your email each day.

~Quentin Danziger

Quentin has over 20 years experience balancing what we refer to as the Real World, with science and spirit.

He has held positions of responsibility and authority, received a Bachelor of Science in Engineering Physics from Colorado School of Mines, and has also studied many avenues of alternative thought. HumanHints is the culmination of his knowledge, experience and practice.

These free daily emails detail concrete, real-world techniques to consciously create any future you choose, while in the throes of daily life created by outdated modes of thought.

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ORANJESTAD - Enjoy your Paella and Sangria together with this fantastic live show! The downtown atmosphere is cool and relaxed with its in- and outside seating.

Our Flamenco Show will be extended this Holiday Season with the performance of Kavey Yarzagaray. This Flamenco guitar player will perform together with Angela Croes on Friday night. This is a show that shouldn't be missed.

The highlight at Casa Tua Barcelona is also the new lunch specials every weekday from Monday till Friday! **A \$9.95 lunch special; Beef tenderloin with a red wine sauce or choose the Grouper Fillet for \$11.95. Both dishes include a soft drink. Fresh Fish lovers can treat the palate to the Whole Red Snapper, served with Rice and a salad.**

All days of the week we serve Cold and Hot tapas as appetizers or the delicious Iberian Ham Pata



Negra which we import directly from Andalucía. As your main course you could choose our Paella, traditionally prepared on the spot by our chef! Combine this Spanish dish with our home-made sangria to complete your dinner.

Of course we saved the best for last as no one does an ending better than Casa Tua with their dreamy Tiramisu. If you're into something different we suggest tasting the Espresso Martini Cocktail as dessert, you won't be disappointed.

The best part about such a good ending is that it guarantees you'll be back for more...



Casa Tua Barcelona Downtown open from 11.30am to 10.30pm, Sunday from 5pm to 11pm tel. 588 5695. Casa Tua Palm Beach open from 5pm to 11pm, tel 586 8470

Adam Steinfeld live tonight!

Don't miss Magic & Comedy tonight at the Westin



STEINFELD: 'MAGIC LIVE!' Theater-of-illusions show... now at the WESTIN - Aruba, see it live! 9pm nightly NightMagic-Comedy- Master of illusions. PREPARE to Witness TOP-Class Illusions, Magic & Comedy on Stage. Adam Steinfeld's Magic Live!® show, at the WESTIN - Aruba... 'Sensational!', 'Amazingly Funny!'...the Hottest ticket in Town! A Must See" 'BEST MAGIC SHOW, I've seen in ages...and I hate Magic! - Carol Butz, Belair, Maryland.

'MagicLive!...is Hip-Comedy Entertainment, Adam is the ultimate Modern Magician' - Jacque Polak, CBS-TV. Steinfeld sophisticated card-sharp street magic, mixed with grand theater illusions is a visual feast...this will be the highlight of your vacation. -Al Blanchard, mystery novelist, Boston, MA.

Steinfeld's, comedy magician, likable on-stage personality, comic interactive-wit, and amazing magic, mixed with his dream-like theatre-of-

illusions, is a sensory overload of the imagination, along with his lovely dancers...a treat for the entire family.

SEE IT LIVE! On-Stage!

"It's obvious Adam's real passion is performing in front of a live audience, as his charisma and charm create an unforgettable show!" Steinfeld is a 'Master of Magic', he invents many of his own Las Vegas illusions that are designed in England, fabricated in Vegas, and travels with him on tour, in a explosion of amazing fun.

THE MUST-SEE SHOW - YOU DON'T WANT TO MISS IT! AROUND THE WORLD AND BACK, Adam Steinfeld: 'MAGIC LIVE!', from Monte Carlo, Hong Kong, Orlando, Miami Beach, Biloxi, Boston, San Juan, New York, Aruba to Vegas, it's the coolest show in town, taking up where Houdini left off." **MAGIC-GRANDILLUSION - COMEDY**



IF YOU GO

What: Magic Live! theater-of-illusions show
Where: Westin - Aruba, palm beach (high-rise area)
Who: starring, comedy illusionist, Adam Steinfeld
Time: 9:00 pm, theater opens at 8:30pm
Tickets: at the door
Price: \$19.95 under 15, \$29.5 adults
Group Sales: 561-1090
website: www.MagicLive.com
Blog: www.MagicOnTheBeach.com

Renaissance Casinos introduce Team of the Fourth Quarter 2009



ORANJESTAD -- Crystal Casino and Seaport Casino introduced their Team of the Fourth Quarter during a cocktail party at the Renaissance Convention Center. Casino Manager Edgar Roos, revealed the names of the top performers – among them two employees, one supervisor and one

manager -- and praised their professional knowledge and conduct during the last quarter of 2009. Winning top honors for the Back of the House Maria Richardson, Casino Cleaner; for the Front of the House Elohuo Maduro, Crystal Dealer. Supervisor Maroushka de Kort, in



charge of Host Attendants and Assistant Cage Manager Clarina Dijkoff, were the other two members of the winning team.

"The four stellar employees, have distinguished themselves in many ways," said Roos, "and deserve special recognitions, for a job well done during the last three month of 2009."

Also cited for excellence, Astrid Helder, Seaport Dealer, Rubert Thomas, Host Attendant and Crystal Floor Supervisor Giovanni Tromp, who went the extra mile, in their positions.

Pictured here, the Team of the Last Quarter introduced. All were eligible as Team of the Year candidates. □



Tony Roma's is the island's headquarters for ribs!

Many restaurants claim to have the best ribs in the land, but only Tony Roma's world famous ribs continue to rack up taste awards from a variety of cities, regions, and countries across the globe. Tony Roma's Palm Beach brings this classic to Aruba.

Great ribs put Tony Roma's on the map, but the menu also features an array of flame-grilled favorites including steaks, seafood and chicken. The menu also serves up fresh salads, fantastic burgers and sandwiches, grilled fresh local fish, mouthwatering desserts and delicious appetizers - especially the popular, made-from-scratch Onion Loaf.

Today, there are more than 240 locations on five continents. From Seattle to Miami, Tokyo to Madrid, and Calgary to Aruba, Tony Roma's is creating an international incident with its flame-grilled fare. Discover why Tony Roma's is now an island dining institution!

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Bow Tie Pasta with Chicken in Scampi Sauce.....	\$12
Chicken Tender Platter.....	\$13
Fish & Fries.....	\$13
Chicken Stack with Pasta Alfredo.....	\$14
Full Slab Original Baby Back Ribs.....	\$15
Jamaican Grilled Chicken.....	\$15

Fine & Affordable Dining at Pam Pam Restaurant

Meet Chef Ludwich Samson and his exquisite menu now unveiled!



Nestled in the quiet neighborhood of Boegoeroei, Perle d'Or apartment complex houses Dutch students and vacationers, as well as a cozy garden eatery, Pam Pam Restaurant & Bar. Aiming to attract a more diverse clientele, Pam Pam has recently adopted a more upscale dining concept. In order to pilot this new concept, rising local chef Ludwich Samson was brought on board, and in just two months on the job, he has

more than proven his worth.

Laid-back, refreshingly young, and ambitious, Ludwich began his career as a chef by enrolling in Aruba's hospitality and culinary arts school—the best decision he has ever made, he wholeheartedly claims. With ten years in the kitchen and three years as a chef, Ludwich has developed an impressive arsenal of cooking skills. He attributes the majority of his growth as a chef to his years

of working under his mentor, Vittorio Muscarlello, owner of Hostaria Da'Vittorio and one of the most highly respected chefs on Aruba.

In his two months with Pam Pam, Ludwich has entirely remodeled the kitchen to make it more efficient. He has also created a whole new menu featuring particularly unique dishes in order to distinguish Pam Pam from the endless number of restaurants along Aruba's hotel strip. While the menu still offers Dutch snacks and typical Dutch platters like sate to appease the many Dutch interns residing at Perle d'Or, the rest of the menu offers upscale fusion cuisine. Lemon grass and chillies give several seafood dishes a Thai flair; homemade ravioli and beef carpaccio salute Italy; crustacean ceviche adds a Peruvian element; and Indonesian spices add zest to a handful of casual main dishes.

Ludwich also craftily adds little unexpected twists to some classic dishes, elevating the uniqueness of his menu. One of his personal favorites is his porcini-crusted filet mignon served with a thyme red-wine reduction. He also delights in the fact that most diners have a hard time figuring out the sweet and spicy deliciousness of his signature crustacean platter. Other interesting interpretations include lump-crab lollipops, chicken cordon blue unorthodoxly stuffed with ricotta and bacon, and for dessert, tiramisu that promises an untraditional layer of decadent Bailey's chocolate mousse.

Needless to say, Ludwich is creative in the kitchen and works extremely hard, currently putting in 12 to 16 hours a day, seven days a week; but he insists that this is not what makes a good chef good. "I simply love what



I do for a living," confides Ludwich, and this is what guarantees success in the kitchen and contented diners. Of course, being a chef can be downright stressful, but Ludwich thrives on the rush of adrenaline on busy nights. And when he peers out of the kitchen and sees a restaurant full of people enjoying their meals, he experiences immense satisfaction. For reservations call: 5877710 or 7483848, or visit us at www.pampamaruba.com. □

Naf. 400,000 accord bolsters civil service

PHILIPSBURG--The civil service apparatus is expected to be strengthened, thanks to the signing of a Naf. 400,000 agreement between the Island Government and Dutch funding agency USONA on Wednesday. The agreement, signed by Personnel Affairs Commissioner Xavier Blackman and USONA Director Reginaldo Doran, paves the way for civil servants to receive valuable training and work experience as St. Maarten moves towards attaining a new status of Country within the Kingdom

of the Netherlands.

As part of the agreement, civil servants will be able to "exchange" work experience with other civil servants in the Kingdom through international internships, professional training programmes, and by participating in conferences. Blackman said the programme would expose civil servants to international environments and enhance their knowledge. Civil servants taking part in the training will be expected to apply what they have learnt on the job. They will also be expected to pass on their skills

to colleagues, Blackman said.

The commissioner thanked the Dutch government for financing this project, which he said would run for a period of three-and-a-half years.

Blackman said the training programme was an important one, as it would strengthen the civil service apparatus and ultimately result in better service to the public. He said the programme involved Government's most valuable resources – its human capital. Blackman underscored the importance of education, and of civil servants continually



upgrading themselves to maintain a strong civil service.

He said too that it was important for civil servants to be adequately trained before St. Maarten assumed its new status as Country within the

Kingdom of the Netherlands.

The exchange training programme is also in line with Government's new recruitment strategy, which is intended to be more effective in attracting persons to work for Country St. Maarten. □

Unacknowledged children to get more rights soon



WILLEMSTAD--Children born out of wedlock and who are unrecognized by their father may soon get more rights, thanks to an amendment in the Civil Code that parliament will handle Tuesday in a Central Committee meeting.

This amendment, when adopted by parliament, will give unacknowledged children the right to apply for a "Declaration of Paternity" that will allow them to have a father listed on their birth

certificate. However, the amendment will exclude them from claiming any inheritance if the father is deceased.

This amendment will bring the Netherlands Antilles in line with most European and Caribbean countries that have already made this provision for unacknowledged children under the "status of children" or similar acts, outgoing president of parliament Pedro Atacho told the press Wednesday via phone.

Similar legislation, dating back to the late 1970s, exists in Anguilla, St. Kitts and Nevis, Jamaica, Grenada, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Antigua, Trinidad and Guyana among others.

A total of 15,268 children were born on Curaçao from 2000 to 2006. Of this, 3,898 children were "without a father" meaning their birth certificate stated father unknown because they were not acknowledged for various reasons.

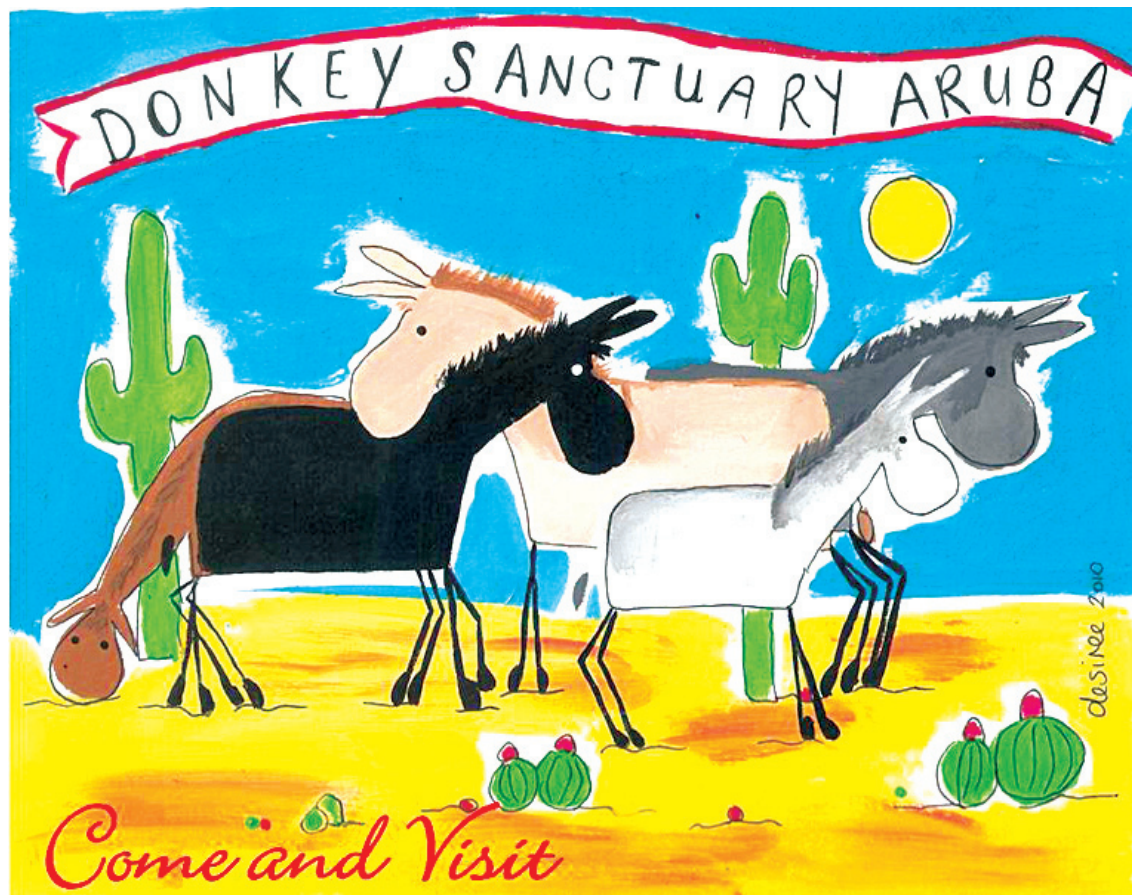
That number of unacknowledged children accounts for 25 per cent of the total births on Curaçao. "This means that in every 2,000 babies born on Curacao annually, 1,000

were recognized, 500 were the product of a marriage and another 500 were born without a father recognizing them," Atacho said.

Breakdown of birth figures for the other four Antillean islands, which include St. Maarten, will be presented to parliament in "due time." The absence of legislation to assist unacknowledged children is considered a violation of the International Treaty on Civil and Political Rights and the Treaty on Human Rights. "The child without a father is not to be blamed," Atacho said.

Also on Tuesday afternoon, Finance Minister Ersilia de Lannooy will present her proposal for the transfer of share of the Curaçao Housing Foundation to the Island Government to the Central Committee.

Earlier on Tuesday, the Central Committee of Parliament will also meet with school boards on Curaçao in a continuing session on youth aggression especially in and around schools. The sessions requested by the PAR faction. Several other sessions have already been held with the police, public prosecutors and other related officials on this issue. □



Labour issues put under microscope at session

PHILIPSBURG--Workers, employers and trade union representative had the opportunity to seek clarification to their labour-related concerns during the first of three informative sessions on labour and the constitutional change process on Wednesday.

Labour Minister Hubert Martis is on island for the sessions, which continues today and wraps up tomorrow at the Sonesta Great Bay Beach Hotel.

Central Government Mediator Kenneth Lopes delivered a lengthy presentation on the labour regulations. He covered a range of issues from overtime and work hours to the minimum wage and the obligations of both workers

and employers.

Some of the issues raised during the interactive question and answer session were issues concerning wages, tips, working hours, the issue of underage workers and strengthening the protocol when complaints are filed at the Central Government Department of Labour.

Several questions were also posed on the rights of workers.

United Federation of the Windward Antilles (UFA) Adviser Willy Haize reiterated earlier calls that the minimum wage should be increased to a more liveable wage of NAf. 2,000 per month. This drew applause from attendees. The abuse of short-term labour contracts by many employers

in St. Maarten was also raised.

Martis in brief remarks at the opening of the forum said his department will do its utmost to facilitate the dismantling process. "I am here today to assure you as stakeholders that my ministry will cooperate to the fullest in efficiently and expeditiously executing all assignments to make the new status a reality," he said.

He said all levels of government should remain focussed in executing the transitional responsibilities, particularly in light of developments in the Netherlands with the recent fall of the Dutch government. The minister said the series of sessions organised by his Ministry in collaboration with the Executive Council of St. Maarten is essential to brief "captains of the industry" – business and labour- on the constitutional transition

process regarding preparations made to transfer labour-related responsibilities to St. Maarten.

"It has also been deemed of equal importance to give stakeholders general insight to and explanation of the current national and international labour legislation. In this respect the social partners can be acquainted with the treaty obligations that future country St Maarten will be committed to," Martis said.

In brief remarks, Labour Commissioner Hyacinth Richardson said with St. Maarten pursuing a new constitutional status it was important that parties are brought up to speed with legislative information to be able to function optimally and operate in accordance with established laws and mandates.

"The impetus and recommendations of all parties

involved is very important in making this three-day workshop and beyond a great success. I would like to encourage all parties to participate to the fullest of their capabilities," Richardson said.

"I look forward to a fruitful working relationship in making all ventures as it pertains to labour a great accomplishment, as one of my foremost concerns on the island. These informative sessions are to be considered steps in signifying the importance of the need for continued improvements between employers and employees, businesses, unions and government, citizens and their country."

Also attending the ceremony were Head of the sector Health, Labour and Social Affairs Jorien Wuite and Patricia Pantophlet from the Central Government Department of Labour. □

Jouvert Morning

The tentative calendar for the 2010 St. Maarten Carnival celebrations raises some concern. Normally, the official holidays of the Queen's Birthday on April 30 and Labour Day on May 1 are combined with one extra day off given for Carnival, usually on April 29, to schedule the main parades. This year Labour Day falls on a Saturday, which means there can be no compensation on a weekday, because that is reserved for when such holidays fall on Sunday, as Saturday is formally considered a working day. Perhaps because of that, apparently it was decided not to have the Grand Parade on April 30 as is normally the case, but rather a day earlier, on Thursday, April 29, to be followed by the so-called Second Day Parade on Friday, April 30, and the closing jump-up and burning of King Momo on Sunday, May 2.

The schedule obviously departs from the premise that the extra day off for Carnival will be April 29, this year the day of the Grand Parade. The problem is that Wednesday, April 28, cannot then be a holiday, which also means participants in the "Jouvert Morning" jump-up planned for 4:00am directly following Tuesday night's Calypso Finals will be expected to go to work that day.

The question can rightfully be asked just how realistic the latter is, considering that many of the people involved probably will not have slept or in any case very little, so that most probably will be dead-tired at the end of the Jouvert Morning event. Consequently, even if they make it to their jobs, their productivity most likely won't be what it usually is, so that forcing them to work on such a day if not absolutely necessary probably doesn't make a whole lot of sense.

While it might create a bit of early confusion because the calendar has been published already, St. Maarten Carnival Development Foundation (SCDF) perhaps would do well to still reconsider the timing of the various parades to get away from the problem mentioned above. Having Jouvert Morning on the expected Carnival holiday on Thursday, April 29, the Grand Parade on the Queen's Birthday on Friday, April 30, and the Second Day Parade on Labour Day on Saturday, May 1, would seem a better idea and still makes possible having the closing jump-up and burning of King Momo on Sunday, May 2. □

Five years in jail for abusing two minors

PHILIPSBURG--A 36-year-old man was sentenced Wednesday by the Court of First Instance to five years for sexually abusing two young girls, including his stepdaughter. During the February 3 hearing, Prosecutor Rienk Mud had asked for six years imprisonment.

Michendo Paesch denied he had sexually abused his now 15-year-old stepdaughter

between August 2004 and June 2009.

Judge Monique Keppels, however, indicated in her written verdict that the court considered the abuse proven. She based this on the credible and very detailed statements given by the stepdaughter, which were confirmed by the statement of her mother, of the other victim, and at some points even by Paesch's own statement. □

Jacoba proposes new Penal Code

WILLEMSTAD--Justice Minister Magali Jacoba has proposed that Parliament approve and adopt a new Penal Code for the Netherlands Antilles that will bring the country in line with international regulations. President of Parliament Pedro Atacho told the St. Maarten press this week that Jacoba would present her proposal to the Central Committee on Wednesday. "Our Penal Code is outdated," he said.

The Minister's proposal includes modification of the manner of punishments and the length of punishment in respect to the crime. The modified juvenile system, alternative punishment and the treatment of drug addicts were also part of the law proposal.

The Netherlands Antilles' international commitment to fight terrorism is also included in the proposal for updating the Penal Code.

Parliament will also deal with the final accounts of the Antilles from 1965 to 2005. In accordance with the constitution, every year Parliament is supposed to approve a final financial report based on the Annual Accounts submitted by the Central Government.

"Governments of the past decades have refrained from [adhering to] the stipulation on the final account. The Minister of Finance [Ersilia de Lannooy] has committed to complying with the procedures as set out in the constitution," particularly considering the

dismantling of the Netherlands Antilles, Atacho said.

The Annual Accounts for 2006 and 2009 are being perused by the National Audit Chamber. Parliament turns its attention to the Bonaire situation and the quest of the opposition there for a referendum on the ongoing constitutional changes in the Antilles, in a public meeting Thursday at 9:00am.

Prime Minister Emily de Jongh-Elhage and Constitutional Affairs Minister Roland Duncan have been summoned to Parliament for the meeting, which was requested by independent Member of Parliament Anthony Nicholas (Democratic Party-Bonaire), and Forsa Kòrsou and MAN of Curaçao. □

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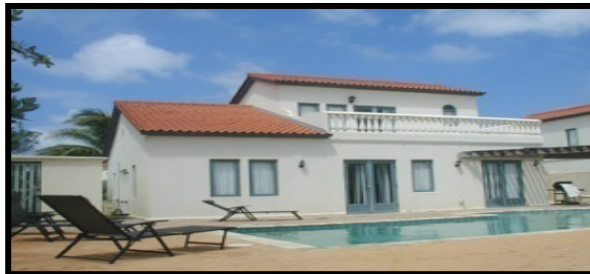
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Según canciller argentino

Argentina nunca usará fuerza para recuperar Malvinas

BUENOS AIRES (Reuters) - El canciller de Argentina, Jorge Taiana, dijo que su país “nunca” usará la fuerza para “recuperar” las Malvinas, en momentos en que una dilatada puja con Gran Bretaña por la soberanía de las islas se intensificó tras el inicio de la exploración petrolera en la zona.

Argentina ha reclamado el control de las islas australes desde que Gran Bretaña las ocupó en el siglo XIX. En 1982, tras la ocupación argentina de las Malvinas, se desató una guerra de dos meses que terminó con la retirada del país sudamericano.

“Los que llevan armas a las aguas del Atlántico Sur y a las Islas Malvinas son las fuerzas de ocupación británicas. La democracia argentina nunca utilizará la fuerza para recuperar las islas”, dijo Taiana en declaraciones reproducidas

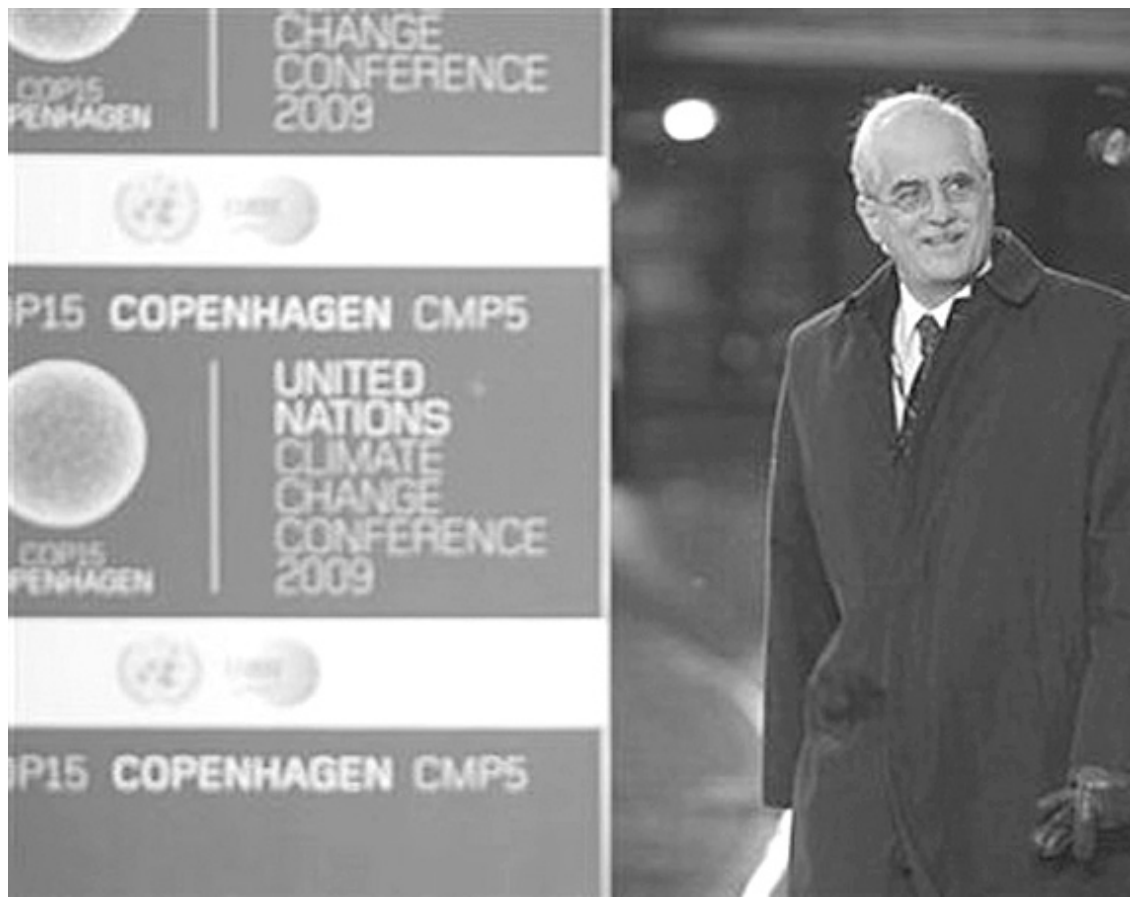


Imagen de archivo del canciller de Argentina, Jorge Taiana, en la conferencia de las Naciones Unidas de Cambios Climáticos, en Copenhage. Dic 18 2009. REUTERS/Ints Kalnins/archivo

Reino Unido”, agregó. Taiana se reunió el miércoles con el secretario general de la ONU, Ban Ki-moon, y le pidió que el organismo internacional intervenga en la disputa.

Gran Bretaña se refiere al archipiélago como Falklands y afirma que la perforación petrolera de la firma británica Desire Petroleum respeta la ley. Argentina asegura que es una violación de su soberanía. La semana previa Argentina dijo que exigirá que todos los barcos que atraviesen sus aguas rumbo al archipiélago obtengan permisos de las autoridades locales.

El “Grupo de Río” de líderes latinoamericanos, que se reunió a principios de semana, emitió un comunicado apoyando las demandas de Argentina para detener la perforación cerca de las Malvinas.

Las Islas Malvinas no producen petróleo en suelo firme y no se ha probado que tengan reservas allí, pero las compañías petroleras aseguran que existen campos marítimos que podrían producir miles de millones de barriles del hidrocarburo. □

Presidente Uribe

Colombianos tienen derecho a pronunciarse en referéndum

BOGOTÁ (AP) - El presidente Alvaro Uribe aseguró que los colombianos tienen derecho a decidir en un referéndum si están o no de acuerdo con una reelección, tema que debate actualmente una alta corte.

“Está bien que los colombianos digan ‘estoy de acuerdo o en desacuerdo’ con la reelección”, dijo Uribe el miércoles por la noche durante un foro en una universidad en Bogotá.

Y, agregó el Presidente, “todos estos días, lo único que yo he dicho es ‘quiero aportar prudencia al tranquilo discurrir de las instituciones’” o a las decisiones judiciales sobre el tema de la reelección.

Las declaraciones del mandatario se produjeron en medio de los debates que lleva desde hace casi dos semanas la llamada Corte Constitucional sobre una ley para llamar a un referéndum que decida la posibilidad de una segunda reelección consecutiva.

En la jornada en una entrevista con la Radio Cordillera, Uribe ratificó que “durante todos estos días de discusión en la Corte

Constitucional he aportado prudencia” al no opinar sobre el debate del tribunal. Pero, añadió el mandatario, “pase lo que pase, lo que propondremos a los colombianos es la reelección de la (política de) ‘seguridad democrática’... eso no se puede aflojar”.

“Hay que mantener la política de seguridad democrática cualquiera sea la decisión de la honorable Corte Constitucional”, añadió Uribe al referirse al que ha sido su caballo de batalla en casi ocho años de gobierno: la política de combate contra grupos armados ilegales, principalmente las guerrillas. Por normas colombianas, la ley para llamar a la consulta, que fue aprobada a fines del 2009 por el Congreso, debe recibir el visto bueno de la Corte o la máxima instancia de nueve magistrados para dirimir asuntos de la Carta Magna, que actualmente prohíbe un segundo gobierno.

Las próximas elecciones presidenciales colombianas están previstas para el 30 de mayo del 2010. □

en un sitio de internet de la Presidencia de Argentina.

“Utilizaremos todos los recursos del derecho internacional. El que está usando la fuerza es el

Uruguay

Hillary Clinton se reunirá con Mujica

MONTEVIDEO (AP) - El presidente electo José Mujica se reunirá el lunes con la secretaria de Estado de los Estados Unidos, Hillary Rodham Clinton, en el primer contacto de alto nivel del futuro mandatario y que puede marcar el rumbo de las relaciones con la potencia estadounidense.

La reunión fue confirmada a la AP en las oficinas de Mujica y se producirá en la mañana del lunes, unas tres horas antes que asuma la presidencia en el Palacio Legislativo. Además de Mujica, perteneciente al movimiento Tupamaro en la coalición de gobierno, estarán presentes dirigentes opositores como el presidente del partido Nacional, Luis A. Lacalle, el secretario general del partido Colorado, Pedro Bordaberry e Iván Posada del partido Independiente.

Clinton estará en Montevideo algunas horas para asistir a la asunción de Mujica que reunirá al menos una decena de presidentes, entre ellos el de Brasil, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, de Venezuela, Hugo Chávez, de Chile, Michelle Bachelet y de Argentina, Cristina Fernández.

La secretaria de estado también visitará Brasil, Chile, Costa Rica y Guatemala entre el 28 de febrero y el 5 de marzo. □

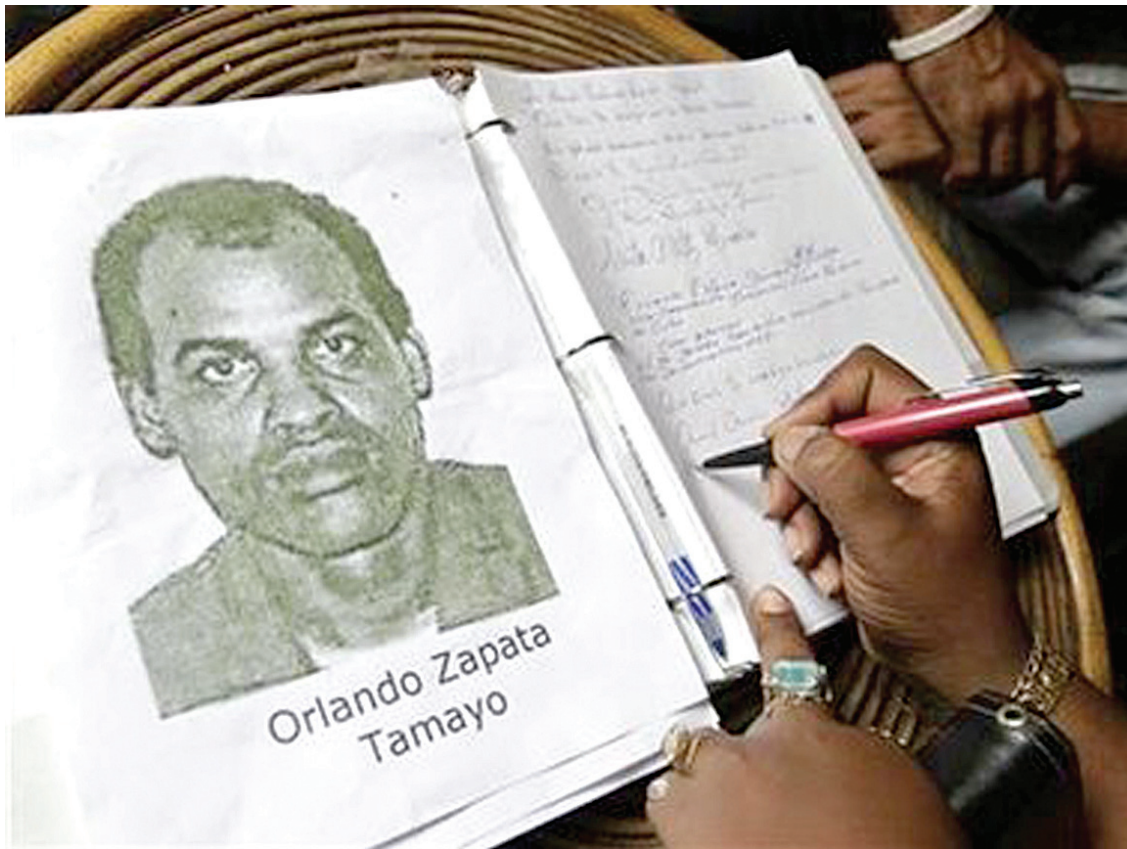
Disidente cubano fue sepultado entre fuertes medidas seguridad

LA HABANA (Reuters) - El disidente cubano Orlando Zapata, quien murió esta semana tras una huelga de hambre de 85 días, fue sepultado el jueves bajo un cielo plomizo en su ciudad natal en el este de Cuba, en medio de un fuerte operativo de seguridad, dijo su madre.

El fallecimiento de Zapata desató críticas internacionales sobre la situación de los derechos humanos en Cuba, tanto de enemigos como Estados Unidos como de países amigos como España. El presidente Raúl Castro dijo que lamentaba su muerte pero culpó de ella a Estados Unidos, a quien acusa de financiar a los disidentes.

Reina Tamayo, la madre de Zapata, dijo a Reuters que más de 100 personas despidieron el féretro de madera en el cementerio de Banes, su pueblo a orillas del Caribe a unos 850 kilómetros al este de La Habana.

“Fuimos custodiados, pero les demostramos que mi hijo seguirá viviendo dentro de nosotros. No les



Una mujer firma un libro de condolencias para el fallecido disidente cubano Orlando Zapata Tamayo, en la Havana. Feb 24 2010. REUTERS/Enrique De La Osa

tenemos miedo”, dijo por teléfono. Según la mujer, policías rodearon toda la noche su casa en Banes, donde fue velado el cuerpo de su hijo, un plomero de 42 años preso desde el 2003.

Las fuerzas de seguridad impidieron que más personas participaran en el funeral, donde algunos gritaron “Zapata Vive”, dijo Tamayo. “Yo pienso

que con el fallecimiento de Orlando Zapata la oposición interna coja más fuerza, coja más valor e intensifique su trabajo pacífico hacia el régimen”, dijo la madre. Opositores dijeron que

Banes, una soñolienta ciudad de 80.000 habitantes cerca de donde nacieron Fidel y Raúl Castro, estaba bajo “estado de sitio” y algunos disidentes debieron disfrazarse para eludir los

controles policiales y llegar a casa de Tamayo.

Zapata murió el martes en un hospital de La Habana, a donde fue trasladado de urgencia desde una prisión de máxima seguridad, sitio donde realizaba una huelga de hambre en reclamo de mejores condiciones de detención.

Es el primer preso político que muere durante una huelga de hambre en Cuba desde 1972. Estados Unidos, la Comisión Europea y España, un Gobierno cercano a Cuba, pidieron la liberación de los 200 presos políticos que, según grupos de derechos humanos, hay en las cárceles de la isla.

Amnistía Internacional pidió una investigación sobre las circunstancias de la muerte del disidente. Cuba considera que los opositores como Zapata son mercenarios reclutados por Estados Unidos para destruir su sistema socialista. □

“Plan de Solidaridad para Haití”

ORANJESTAD - El Consulado General de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela en Aruba, el Instituto Venezolano para la Cultura y la Cooperación hacen un llamado a la Comunidad Bolivariana y demás integrantes de la colonia venezolana, arubianos y latinoamericanos en general para que asistan y hagan sus donaciones en la verbena benéfica para recaudar fondos para los damnificados de la hermana República de Haití, los cuales serán entregados en el mismo acto a los representantes de la Cruz Roja Internacional de Aruba. “No olvidemos a Haití”.

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Reporte de OEA critica a Venezuela por derechos humanos

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - El organismo de defensa de los derechos humanos de la Organización de Estados Americanos (OEA) criticó la concentración de poder y el freno a las libertades civiles en Venezuela bajo el Gobierno del presidente Hugo Chávez, de tendencia izquierdista.

En un duro reporte de 319 páginas dado a conocer el miércoles, la Comisión Interamericana de Derechos Humanos (CIDH) destacó la “falta de una efectiva separación e independencia de los poderes públicos en Venezuela”.

Dijo que la libertad de expresión y el derecho a la protesta pacífica han sido restringidos y que la “intolerancia política” predomina en el país sudamericano, un gran proveedor de petróleo a Estados Unidos.

Las críticas del foro hemisférico de 34 naciones con base en Washington serán

música para los oídos de los rivales de Chávez, quienes dicen que es un dictador en formación que ha socavado la independencia del poder legislativo y judicial, mientras cierra los medios de comunicación opositores.

“Se está utilizando el poder punitivo del Estado para intimidar o sancionar a personas en virtud de su opinión política”, sostiene el reporte de la OEA. La comisión concluyó que existe en Venezuela “un ambiente hostil para el libre ejercicio de la participación política en disenso”.

El reporte detectó un “patrón de impunidad en los casos de violencia” contra manifestantes, mujeres, miembros de sindicatos, indígenas, activistas de derechos humanos y periodistas. El reporte de la OEA elogia al Gobierno de Chávez por erradicar el analfabetismo, reducir la pobreza y aumentar el acceso de los más pobres de Venezuela a la salud. □

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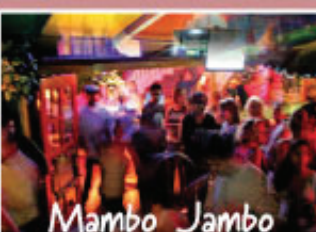
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